SPIRIT POSSESSION in THE NEPAL HIMALAYAS

Edited by

cock & Rex L. Jones

SPIRIT POSSESSION
in
THE NEPAL HIMALAYAS

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John T. Hitchcock & Rex L. Jones

Translations of French Articles
by
Harriet Leva Beegun

VIKAS PUBLISHING HOUSE PVT LTD
New Delhi Bombay Bangalore Calcutta Kanpur

VIKAS PUBLISHING HOUSE PVT LTD
5 Ansari Road, New Delhi 110 002
Savoy Chambers, 5 Wallace Street, Bombay 400 001
10 First Main Road, Gandhi Nagar, Bangalore 560 009
8/1-B Chowringhee Lane, Calcutta 700 016
80 Canning Road, Kanpur 208 004

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ISBN 0 7069 0438 9

1V02H0701

306.095496
H633P

306.095496
HIT

Printed at India Offset Press, Mayapuri, New Delhi 110027,
and published by Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd,
5 Ansari Road, New Delhi 110002

To the curers and healers of Nepal

Errata

1. p. 16, lines 5 & 6; the word "trance" should be substituted for the phrase "non-ordinary psychic state".
2. p. 17, lines 11–19 should be omitted and "most authorities on shamanism." added following line 10.
3. Ftn. numbers 4 & 5 should be added to the last paragraph on p. 19 and first paragraph on p. 20 respectively.

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Acknowledgements

The editors would like to express their appreciation to the following organizations and persons for permitting publication of English translation of articles first appearing in French: 1) Centre de Documentation et de Recherches sur L'Asie du Sud-est et la Monde Insulindien, and Mr. G. Condominas for permission to publish a revised translation of Alain Fournier's article, 'Note préliminaire sur le Puimbo et la Ngiami les chamanes Sunuwar de Sabra' (ASEMI, vol. IV, No. 1, 1973); 2) the Musée de l'Homme and Professor Jacques Millot, Membre de l'Academie des Sciences, Directeur d'*Objets et Mondes*, for permission to publish an English version of Mr. Marc Gaborieau's article, 'Note préliminaire sur le dieu Maṣṭā' (*Objets et Mondes*, vol. 9, No. 1, 1969); 3) Société Asiatique and the editors of *Journal Asiatique* for permission to publish an English translation of Professor A.W. Macdonald's article, 'Notes préliminaires sur quelques *jhākri* du Muglān (*Journal Asiatique*, 1962); and 4) the editors of *L'Homme* and Professor A.W. Macdonald for permission to publish an English translation of his article, 'La Sorcellaire dans le code Népalais' (*L'Homme*, vol. 8, No. 1, 1968).

For the English translations of the above four articles and two other articles by Phillipe Sagant and Corneille Jest, written especially for this volume, we are indebted to Ms. Harriet Leva Beegun of the Department of French, University of California, Los Angeles. Frequently ignoring her own work to meet deadlines, we feel that Ms. Beegun did an excellent job of rendering into English often difficult and obscure passages and references. Since she is neither trained in anthropology nor is she familiar with Nepal, the editors assume the responsibility for any errors that may have been committed in the translations.

We are especially grateful to Mrs. Mari Walker for the many hours of typing that went into the preparation of the manuscript. To Augusta Molnar we owe thanks for helping with the Tibetan transliterations, and to Mr. Tony Antoniello and especially Mr. Robert Cardinalli we owe thanks for help in preparation of the bibliography.

John Hitchcock would like to thank the Graduate School of the University of Wisconsin, Madison, for a summer research grant that made possible much of his editorial work on the volume, and Rex Jones expresses appreciation to the State University of New York Research Foundation for a Grant-in-Aid that assisted in preparation of the final manuscript.

Note on Transliteration

In editing the volume we attempted to transcribe Nepāli words according to the usage of Turner's *A Comparative and Etymological Dictionary of the Nepali Language* (1965 edition). For English spelling, we used the new Random House dictionary. In some cases, this led to changes in spelling preferred by the authors. Turner, for example, uses 'Nepāli' when referring to the language. We followed this usage, though some of our authors did not. Similarly, we used the Random House spelling for 'séance', though many preferred the anglicized 'seance'. We used 'Nepali' or 'Nepalis' to refer to nationals and also used 'Nepali' as an adjective. ('There were many Nepalis present'; 'it's a Nepali custom'). Generally, however, we used Nepāli words without the anglicized plural. ('There were many Gurung present'). In the case of a word like 'Gurung' and other caste, clan and place names, we used the common anglicized version without diacritical marks: e.g. instead of Turner's 'Gurůn', we used 'Gurung'. For Nepali festivals, deities and months we have used Turner's spellings with diacritical marks but have not italicized them. Nepali proper names have not been written with diacritical marks. Where specific and contextually well-defined regions are meant, we have used capitals: e.g. 'Far Western Nepal'. We have converted meters and centimeters to feet and inches, thinking that these measurements would have more meaning to English-speaking readers.

Each individual author's transliteration of Tibetan and Tibeto-Burman words was maintained. Where possible, we indicated the distinction from Nepāli words by use of capital letters following the word as it first appeared, for example the Limbu word '*phedangma* (L)', or (*phedangma*, L).

With previously published articles in French that have been translated for this volume, we have generally adhered to the original usage of references, with one major exception: all bibliographical references are included in a general bibliography at the end of the volume, and the citation style of the *American Anthropologist* has been followed, where only the author, date, and page number are cited in parentheses in the text. We hope that the resulting comprehensive bibliographical reference to the subject matter of the volume will be useful in and of itself.

INTRODUCTION

When Nepal first opened her borders to international research in the early 1950s the scholars who visited the country could be numbered on one's fingers. Since then, and especially during the last half decade or so, there has been a burst of activity from both Nepali and foreign researchers. Results can be seen in publications in history, government, economics, education, fine arts, linguistics, anthropology and other areas. Though the days are past when anthropologists working in the field had to draw up an ethnological and linguistic map of the region in which they wished to work, information about many aspects of Nepal's society and culture is still scanty. One of the least known aspects, which is surprising in view of its significance in the lives of most Nepalis, is the subject of this volume.

The idea for this anthology originated when the editors realized how many of their own questions arising from an interest in the subject could be answered with information possessed by colleagues who had worked either in their general region or elsewhere in Nepal. Only a little of the material was available in published form and some that had appeared in foreign journals was difficult to obtain. We believed a collection would be of benefit to these scholars and that translation of articles into English, Nepal's second academic language, would enhance its usefulness for Nepali researchers.

We must admit, at the outset, an unavoidable failure. Our intention was to make the volume fully international and representative of all scholars who had material, published or un-published; but so rapidly did we reach the limits of an economically feasible publication that we had to stop issuing requests much earlier than intended. We apologise to scholars in our own and other countries whom we very much wanted to include but could not. Initially we had hoped each essay would provide an ethnographical sketch of the complex each author knew and to this end we provided a topical guide, a kind of *Notes and Queries*, asking for details from a wide range of contexts, including the psychological, ecological and sociocultural. Realising that most authors would have information in depth on only one or a few features of their complex and might wish to present a sample of their analysis, we went on to suggest a contribution with two sections: an ethnographic sketch and an optional analysis of one topic. This programme turned out to be unworkable.

The difference in interests and kinds of information available to each author was too vast.

We began by using the *shamanism* to describe the kind of phenomenon we had in mind, but soon realised that we were facing a conceptual problem and no agreement could be reached among the contributors on the basic definition. Despite this difficulty, we felt there was sufficient agreement on the general nature of the phenomenon to provide a theme for the book, using a loose definition of shaman as a part time specialist who through the controlled trance or state of possession is able to divine the future, diagnose disease and misfortune, and otherwise bring aid to his clients. We asked each contributor to select material with this in mind and also to follow where possible the suggested outline. As envisaged the volume would have a fundamental coherence and be justified by the novelty of the information provided.

As the final contributions arrived we selected *Spirit Possession* as the title, but as with the earlier term, *Shamanism*, we intend it only as an approximation, a word pointing to a broad area of experience rather than a strict framework. It has its shortcomings. For example, in general usage we would not call a reincarnate lama 'spirit-possessed', though when specially defined, as by Aziz, and Jones in the initial contribution, we can accept the term in this sense. Secondly, the reader will note that in the succeeding article by Reinhard, the term is inadequate to encompass one of the most characteristic shamanic spiritual experiences: leaving the body and travelling to other worlds. We have retained it despite these shortcomings, because we know of no better term to bring to mind the larger portion of the volume's most characteristic subject matter.

Besides its usefulness to scholars who have worked in Nepal or who plan to in the future we hope this volume will commend itself to tourist-visitors. Most foreigners who come to Nepal realize that its peoples are Hindu or Buddhist or a subtle mixture of the two. The colourful public Hindu rites of its monarchy - marriages, funerals and coronations - have attracted world wide media coverage and there is a general awareness that a minority of Nepalis, especially the Tibet-orientated population along its Northern borders, are Buddhist. But few are aware how many people throughout the country participate in what might be termed a 'third religion', as thoroughly a part of the fabric of their lives as Hinduism and Buddhism, and just as intricately enmeshed with these two.

Though Buddhist and Hindu religious observances are performed openly in the streets and at the many public temples and shrines, the rites of this 'third religion' are seldom observed by the casual visitor. The only hint of their occurrence, almost always for individual families in their homes behind closed doors at night, may be the sound of a persistent drum or of chanting as one

walks after dark along deserted alleys. Night sounds such as these may be the only evidence of this 'third religion' that trekkers encounter in the hills, though they may sometimes witness a daytime ritual - perhaps a medium seated before a large gathering atop a stone pedestal, or a befeathered shaman dancing to his drum in a procession of clansmen to their communal shrine. It is hoped that this volume, in assembling a generous portion of what is known at present about spirit possession in Nepal, will enrich an interested visitor's stay with a deeper knowledge of this vital aspect of Nepal's religious life.

The phenomena of trance and possession have a sense of immediacy, of everyday importance, but a part of their fascination for the observer is the knowledge of how central they have always been in human experience. The central feature - a belief that we can enter into a direct and very personal communication with another world - was probably born with self-consciousness and the ability to talk. Before the development of language, estimates vary between two million and 75,000 years ago, we can imagine the existence of a vague sense of something at the edge of awareness - of something in the dread encircling darkness of night from which terror could spring, or of something separate and beyond, perhaps as in moments when the wordless protohuman consciousness experienced oneness with all that encircled it.

In prelinguistic eras these moments may have been symbolized and shared through mime, music and dance. Only speech, however, could bring about the fuller sharing as revealed in these pages. In view of what we find in Nepal and elsewhere, whatever the manner in which these moments were first communicated, it seems probable that two interpretations must have been common and had, singly or in combination, become traditional in various early populations. One interpretation translated the awesome sense of union as a movement of the soul, outward and upward to immerse itself in what lay beyond. In the second, union occurred when what lay beyond came inward and penetrated the soul. Readers will notice that some Nepali religious specialists who claim mystical experience use flight as an interpretation but by far the greatest number use possession by spirits. Whether or not they are true mystics is a question that will trouble some readers- as it has some contributors. It will be noticed, however, that the question does not trouble most followers of the 'third religion'. So long as their religious specialists claim union and interpret it according to community tradition, which generally means according to the two early traditions, they are accepted as legitimate. But for the 'religion' to have continued as long as it has, we suspect that more than verbal or ritual interpretation links present and remote past. In every generation it seems likely that some specialists share with their ancient progenitors the religion's mystic basis and origin.

Whether in earliest times one of the ways of translating the mystical experience developed before the other is, of course, a moot question. Eliade, a foremost student of ancient mysticism, believes the experience was first conceived of as flight to join a celestial being, an interpretation preserved and reflected in the widespread use of feathers by present-day shamans: He suggests that an alternative - possession of the soul by emissary spirits - came later and was a degenerate development. But although we prefer to think that plural traditions, uninvidiously distinguished, were originating contemporaneously in various early human groups, we do not wish to argue the preference. Our suggestion is that the origins of what we encounter in these essays were probably mystical, and traditions of interpretation, whether of flight or possession, may well go back to the Pliocene but no doubt were old when figures that appear to be shamans were painted on the walls of Upper Pleistocene caves.

Mystical experiences and other unusual states of consciousness have become subjects of an enormously popular literature, and many books, like this one, describe examples from Asia. Within this steady stream of reports from around the world, *Spirit Possession in the Nepal Himalayas* is directed to a cautious and critical readership that has an interest in such occurrences but wonders what they may have observed had they been present. Readers can be reasonably certain that what they might have observed would not be very different from what they read here. Accounts such as these are particularly valuable when a number of widely-read recent books, some of them claiming to be anthropological accounts, completely blur the distinction between careful reporting and novelistic imagination.

Although the shamans and other religious specialists encountered in these essays speak little-known languages and engage in rites that seem strange, we realize on reflection that much of what they do is not unlike what is found with ease in many western communities. A central rite in at least one Christian church is possession of members by the Holy Spirit, and many persons, in and out of organized religion, are well known for supernatural powers of healing and prognostication. A similarity we may find more difficult to appreciate is how closely shamans resemble psychiatrists, and we may find it even harder to believe that the essays provide material of practical import for health care, whether in the West or in Nepal. For although both shamans and psychiatrists are successful in treating mental distress - and can also help in the cure of many physiological ailments - it may seem a travesty to regard them as very nearly alike. On a scientific basis no one knows exactly why shamans are effective, nor in the treatment of mental illness, whether they merely remove symptoms or bring about deeper and more permanent personality adjustments. For this reason they are usually compared unfavourably to Western psychiatrists whose treatments are presumed to be solidly based on controlled scientific experiment.

But this is a dubious claim. In regard to it, E. Fuller Torrey, a psychiatrist who has studied shamanic treatment, makes this statement:

> The techniques used by Western psychiatrists are on exactly the same scientific plane ... If one is prescientific then so is the other. The only exceptions to this are some of the physical therapies, in particular some drugs and shock therapy, which have been shown in controlled studies to be effective in producing psychiatric change. None of the psychological therapies have been so shown. In fact efforts to show this - so called 'outcome studies' - have been notoriously negative ... (1972:9-10)

It would seem that we must understand successful psychotherapy, whether by shamans or psychiatrists, as an art. Once this is accepted the apparent gulf between shamans and their Western counterparts is removed. A most important consequence is that shamans become worthy of serious attention. We find ourselves asking what can be learned from the methods of shamans, and delving further, what the implications are for Western psychiatry and for improving mental health and medical care in developing countries like Nepal where shamanism plays a major traditional role.

Many of these essays will be of interest for the insights they provide into the shamanic art. People turn to shamans when they are ill or anxious and through their ministrations are given confidence. Though focused mainly on the psyche, shamanic treatment has physiological effects. This is especially true of bodily ailments that originate in fears and tensions. But even in cases without a large psychic component, and in cases where physiological illness in time will cure itself, the treatment hastens recovery. Where anxiety is the whole or primary factor, shamanic treatment often has immediate helpful results.

In attempting to understand the shamanic treatment Torrey (1972) discusses four aspects of the relation between client and curer. He notes that shamans discuss and interpret their clients' ailments within a world view both accept. In Nepal, as these essays indicate, many forms of anxiety are relieved by attributing problems to witchcraft. Attributions to childhood trauma within the family would be meaningless. Both shamans and psychiatrists achieve results by ordering clients' experience in a meaningful way, and a way that seems to enhance the possibility of control. The essays provide detailed examples of what this means for various Nepali communities.

A second factor Torrey mentions is the personality of the shaman. What kind of person is most effective in psychotherapy? Empathy is a prime factor, and these essays would support a view of the shaman as a personality with great sensitivity to clients' needs. As a

source of this sensitivity they suggest a period of youthful and disruptive psychological tension, successfully overcome by learning the shaman's role. They also suggest that a major component is acting ability. It is not only that shamans assume the identity of characters from the other world and in this way make vivid their control of its confusions and terrors, but also - by the same empathic gift - that they can adjust treatment with sensitivity and insight to their clients' needs.

Torrey's third component includes all aspects of the shaman's art that raise a client's expectations and which support belief in the shaman's power. These essays reveal many ways legitimacy is achieved. If we were to select only one, it would be the shaman's connection, supported by traditional belief and highly suggestive ritual, with a source of power and insight beyond any that the client can command or even fully understand.

As the fourth component Torrey mentions an array of techniques of therapy, many of which will be found in these essays. To mention only a few, we find the use of suggestive symbolism in amulets and charms, music therapy, group therapy, and acceptable ways of expressing aggression such as live sacrifices. A feature of Nepali shamanism distinguishing it from traditional curing in many other parts of the world is the relative lack of drug use. For the most part curing is effected solely by psychological means, by the use of music, language, costuming and other symbols in a dramatic group context.

There are two implications relevant for the West arising from what these essays suggest. The comparative effectiveness of shamans in Nepali society, and of psychiatric social workers, psychologists and the occasional gifted housewife in our own, lends support to those who argue that successful treatment of psychological ailments does not require a medical degree. In the light of how important empathic insight seems to be, our method of selecting psychiatrists - a method that demands a medical degree and hence excludes persons who are not attracted by many of the required disciplines - is perhaps faulty and rests on the questionable assumption that anxiety (to take an example) is a 'disease' in the same sense as 'amoebiasis'. Secondly, the necessity for curers and clients to share assumptions, values and concepts, and not necessarily any particular set of them, suggests that Western psychiatrists who are effective on New York's wealthy East side will need different training, and possibly even a different background, if they are to be effective in prisons like Attica.

The same kind of implication leads us to the question of the practical import of the essays for medical development in Nepal. One clear lesson would seem to be that there can be no easy transfer of Western psychiatry. Each world view is too different and too deeply rooted in interpretations of experience that carry

conviction and emotional impact because they have been lived with since earliest childhood. To be most effective, Western, or Western trained psychiatrists, must recognize the cultural place of the shamanic role in traditional Nepali society, attested to by the fact that though affected, it has seldom been displaced by the two great literate religious traditions. They must further recognize that in large measure the explanation for the shaman's continuing importance has been due to his success in alleviating psychic ills. They must realize shamans have something to teach them.

But is not shamanism a serious block to treatment where the primary source of illness is organic? In Nepal at present one must admit that some who could and should go to hospitals depend instead on shamans, with serious or fatal consequences. However, experience elsewhere in the world, with the Navaho as a notable example, suggest that shamans have been able to help in the spread of medical aid. When the value of their contributions are recognized, they generally have been ready to accept and recognize their limitations. After learning to recognize illnesses requiring a medical doctor or hospitalization, they have taken an active part in getting their clients to avail themselves of such treatment. And even in cases that must be treated medically, they have a useful role beyond that of referral. Clients may accept the world view of the doctor who tells them a fly-borne organism has caused their typhoid fever. But in a way characteristic of traditional societies in transition, they also are likely to have retained, regardless of incongruities, their own older world view. To relieve anxiety they may want to consult a shaman, to find out why that particular fly landed on their food, and to be reassured that the witch who sent it has been banished.

The essays suggest other ways in which shamans can participate in medical development. They, together with mediums, priests and lamas, are specialists in the local ideology. Health workers attempting to introduce new ideas of causation - causes of water-borne illness for example - will be more effective if they understand how local people interpret these illnesses. In some instances shamans are politically prominent and for this reason alone their cooperation is needed. But even when they are not - and in Nepal this seems to be more typical - their support is valuable because of the number and extent of their contacts. Often they have a large clientele, including families from outside their immediate neighbourhood and from a wide range of castes.

* * *

The arrangement of the essays is primarily geographical, moving from east to west. In addition to the geographical sections are two others, one containing two definitional and classificational essays, the second including articles dealing with spirit possession in the literate tradition.

In the opening essay, as a preliminary to a discussion of the sociological implications of spirit possession and to a refinement and enlargement of Lewis' (1971) approach to the topic, Jones draws on the essays in this volume to set up a four-fold classification of spirit possession based on structural relations of time and space. He goes on to suggest how each of the four is related to a different social context. Reinhard is concerned with problems involved in defining the term shaman. Drawing on a wide range of sources, he arrives at a conception that seems likely to prove extremely useful, if not definitive. Both these introductory essays owe something to the work of other contributors presented here, and they demonstrate the advances in adequacy and sharpness of conceptualization that such an anthology encourages. Jones' article, in addition, demonstrates how such material stimulates and provides a basis for theoretical formulation. Both essays provide points of vantage for approaching the other articles.

Section 1 deals with spirit possession in Eastern Nepal. The article by Shirley Kurz Jones describes in intimate detail the ethnographer's experience with a Limbu woman who underwent a series of possessions by Yuma Sammang, a Limbu divinity. The author indicates that the Limbu woman frequently used a state of possession to manipulate both the researcher, who employed her as a cook and housekeeper, and public opinion, in order to raise her social and economic status in the community. Her possession was thought by many to be the first stage in the acquisition of shamanic power and, as is common, was openly and publicly resisted. The article places the nature of possession and Limbu shamanism within the context of day-to-day community activities and helps us to understand more clearly why particular people are more suited to the profession than others.

Rex Jones' article offers an ethnographic description of Limbu shamanism in the area of Terhathum Bazaar, Eastern Nepal. Five different types of Limbu shamans are found in the area, each with a somewhat different religious specialization. The author notes that the definition of a shaman as a 'controlled ecstatic' is too rigid when applied to the activities of Limbu shamans who serve their clients both as diviners and healers through the power of possession and the trance, as well as priests, who offer sacrifice, prayer, and perform rituals without the aid of personal, supernatural power. In this way, Limbu shamans operate both in the 'daytime' and at 'night'. Their position as religious specialists, however, is inherited. To become a Limbu shaman, one must first have personal contact with a spirit or deity in the Limbu pantheon. From Jones' account we learn that Limbu shamans are specialists in the oral literature of the Limbu and call upon spirits and deities not found elsewhere in Nepal. Furthermore, they seldom refer to themselves with the term *jhākri* or *dhāmi*.

Philippe Sagant provides a vivid description of the 'calling' of several Limbu shamans with whom he had contact in the Mewa Khola

area of Northern Limbuan. Many of these accounts are given in the shaman's own words while others are based on observations made by Sagant at ceremonies such as Nahangma, for the welfare of the Limbu household head, and at the shaman's initiation ceremonies. In the article, Sagant refers to the Limbu religious practitioners as 'priests' rather than 'shamans', but it is the view of the editors that his description of possession and trance is not incompatible with the use of the term 'shaman'.

He distinguishes between two types of Limbu shamans - the *phedangma* and the *bijuwā*. The former are symbolically associated with the 'upper', 'front', and 'right', while the latter are associated with the 'lower', 'back', and 'left'. This symbolic classification adds to the data in Rex Jones' article where mythology describes the *phedangma* as originating in 'lightness' and the *bijuwā* (*yeba* or *yema*) originating in 'darkness'. The former is associated with 'good' while the latter is associated with 'evil'

Of special importance in this article is the detailed description of the initiation of another Limbu shaman, the *yuma*, which appears to be of more importance in the area where Sagant did his fieldwork than in the Terhathum area where the Joneses worked.

In his original French manuscript, Sagant had included observations on the psychology of Limbu 'priests', some statistical data, and a detailed presentation of the 'traditional steps' taken by the 'priest' during his 'trance' or 'journey' in the Nahangma ritual. Unfortunately these data had to be eliminated because of length, and it is hoped that Sagant will publish them elsewhere in the future.

Alain Fournier's article describes spirit possession and the activities of shamans among the Sunuwar of the Tamba and Mauling Rivers of Eastern Nepal. He specifically describes his experience in the village of Sabra. According to Fournier, the Sunuwar of that area call upon two kinds of shamans, a *puimbo*, which is generally a male, and a *ngiami*, generally a female. Although these two shamans are especially helpful in times of illness, which is believed to be caused by various spirits and supernatural forces, they also perform seasonal, domestic, and life-cycle rituals. In this way, they also serve as 'priests', as do Limbu shamans. Furthermore, the Sunuwar shamans carry this a little farther in that they will not offer blood sacrifice on these occasions. Instead, they are assisted by specialists who make the sacrifices.

Beliefs and practices associated with Sunuwar shamanism and possession bear a number of other resemblances to the Limbu complex: for example, the ranking of shamans according to the powers of helping spirits, and the specialized functions of those shamans who deal with misfortunes believed to have been caused by spirits of those who die by accident, violence, or in childbirth.

Nicholas Allen describes the shamanic complex as he observed it among the Thulung Rai. He notes that the sharp distinction often made between a 'priest' and a 'shaman' is problematic in terms of his data. Allen feels that tribal 'priests' have more in common with the central Asiatic traditions than do the Nepali *jhãkri* and contrasts the two in terms of 'order' and 'disorder'. The tribal priest deals with the 'orderly supernatural' while the *jhãkri* deals with the 'forces of disorder that afflict individual households'. He goes on to say, however, that the 'distinctions' and 'functions' of the two are 'blurred' and that we should not focus on any one aspect of the situation which might lead us to 'mutilate the total picture'. He chooses to focus on the *jhãkri*, since he claims it is the *jhãkri* who typically undergoes 'voluntary possession' or ecstasy. He states that the Thulung Rai distinguish sharply between tribal priests and *jhãkri*, preferring the term '*dewa nokcha*' or '*bijwā*' for the former. Such distinctions also are typical of the Limbu, Sunuwar, and Gurung, and his descriptions of the shaman's altar (*thān*), costume, and other paraphernalia show them to be similar to those elsewhere in Nepal, especially among the Limbu.

Robert Paul draws a sharp distinction between Sherpa shamanism and Lamaistic Buddhism, noting that the former is on the decline, He cites the cases of four Sherpa shamans who have given up the practice. Two of them have become village lama and have devoted the remainder of their lives to the study of texts and personal salvation. Paul also feels that Sherpa shamanism has found itself in competition with Nepali shamans of lower castes who have emigrated into the area, which coupled with the activities of the lama, has further contributed to its decline. In the total context of Sherpa religious tradition, Paul believes that shamanism must be seen as one side of structural dichotomy with lamaism or orthodox Buddhism as the other, representing the different poles of a continuum from ecstatic to formal, personal to universal, sexual to ascetic, this-worldly to other-worldly, and so on.

As a further note, Paul describes the decline of shamanism in terms of the lama's orientation towards death and the concern with rebirth (*karma*). He notes that in Buddhism personal perfection must be attained through a submission of egoistic drives to transcendental and eternal truths, which are especially significant to individuals at death. The shamanistic journey 'to the land of the dead' is thereby transformed and completely incorporated within the 'formal doctrine of the Tibetan Buddhist Religion'. (See Jones 1968). In this manner, as is evident in Stablein's article on the Mahākāla ritual of Tantric Buddhism, the 'spontaneous ecstasy' of the shaman gives way to the 'formalized ritual' of the lama, the priest, or the vajramaster. This theme of 'rationalization' also is apparent among the Gurung (see Messerschmidt in this volume) and to a lesser extent, elsewhere in Nepal where Hindu and Buddhist doctrines have begun to replace and incorporate

indigenous religious traditions. The shaman, if he survives, becomes 'grounded' and his activities are relegated to this worldly concern. Paul sees the change as part of the overall direction of history.

In the second section we move to Central and Western Nepal, and in the opening article Wolf D. Michl introduces the *jhãkri*, a type of shaman very characteristic of the more northerly sub-Himalayan regions of Central Nepal. The role is described as found among a population predominantly Chantel and Kami, groups inhabiting the high ridges south of Dhaulagiri. Although Michl's major informant was Chantel, he notes that shamans are drawn from both groups and serve both; and that among other functions, they strengthen the community's psychological adaptation to a very difficult, storm-afflicted environment.

The Chantel are lightly influenced by Hinduism. Although they might employ a Brahman priest (in contrast to the Kami, who cannot because of their untouchable status) they seldom do. Thus the shaman is almost unchallenged as the focal religious figure, and this may explain why one *jhãkri*, contrary to the usual rule both in this region and elsewhere in Nepal, can live entirely on income from his practice.

Other features of the complex are unusual. Michl reports the existence of a female shaman (*jhārini*), a rare phenomenon; and he finds that every shaman learns his techniques, including his costume, directly from a deity or spirit. Although *jhãkri* elsewhere do not all claim to have learned from a human guru, most do (at least in part), so that what is exceptional in other places is here the rule. Michl points to the important integrating role played by the most respected shaman, a Chantel. By blaming problems on spirits he often is able to depersonalise a conflict and in this way defuse it.

In my own essay I present aspects of a shamanic complex which Patricia Hitchcock and myself encountered and filmed in 1961. (Hitchcock and Hitchcock:1966a). Located in the south western foothills of the Dhaulagiri Range, it now seems to represent one of the 'hearth areas' or points of maximum intensity and climax for the kind of shamanism that has a repertoire of story-songs and which places heavy emphasis on ascensional symbolism, including a pole-climb initiation. As is pointed out, it also duplicates with remarkable specificity many of the ritual elements found in Inner Asia among peoples such as the Tungus; and though finding it difficult to believe that an actual trance state is a necessary element in Bhujel shamanism, the Bhujel, like the Tungus, interpret their activities as soul-journey or possession by an intrusive spirit. Though without the same political importance as the Ath Hajar Parbat shaman described by Michl, the Bhujel shaman draws on his array of techniques to participate in many other aspects

of social life. Besides the family, which is the focus for his most concerted efforts, he is significant for the localized lineage, the local caste group and the community as a whole.

The seance is the primary context for the Bhujel shaman's activities, and in illustration, I have selected parts of an actual séance: a soul-killing. Whatever additional functions it may serve, the Nine Witch Song serves to strengthen confidence in the shaman and to validate his role. The song reminds those who gather for a séance that their shaman's costume is the costume of the First Shaman, and by reminding them of the primal agreement between this mythical figure, who represents Good, and the Witch Sister, who represents Evil, it assures them that their shaman, who now embodies the First Shaman, can draw on the agreement to benefit his patient. I interpret the killing of a deceased child's troublesome soul as a dual rite of passage, in which the child's soul passes from involvement in family life through an undifferentiated, womb-like state to absorption in death; and the family passes from emotional involvement with the dead child through a similar undifferentiated state, to a willed breaking of its ties to the dead infant.

In a Gurung community situated in the southern slopes of Annapurna, Donald A. Messerschmidt describes two religious specialists, the *pajyu* and the *khepr̃e*. Both are recruited exclusively from one of the two ranked divisions into which Gurung clans are grouped, and both are loci for influences from the three traditions that comprise the complex religious life of Gurung society, namely, Hinduism, Tibetan Buddhism (lamaism), and a tradition apparently deriving from pre-Buddhist Bon. Although both specialists prognosticate and perform curing rites, their most characteristic contribution is made during obsequies when they enable a departed soul to journey to the village of the gods.

With the *pajyu* and *khepr̃e* we encounter a complex where trance is not a feature. Nor does either specialist embody spirits or send his soul on a journey. The *pajyu* and *khepr̃e* use a different technique to control spirits, most notably during post-burial rites when they bring a departed soul back from the underworld and free it from demonic captors.

A valuable contribution of this essay is the heightened awareness it brings of further avenues of research. Among the most interesting of these is the historical significance of two places: the ancestral village of Khhol and the village of Lupra, with which the *khepr̃e* apparently has significant connections. The essay also alerts us to the religious effects of Nepal's increasingly rapid modernization.

Marc Gaborieau's essay describes his study of a cult that is widespread in Western Nepal and adjacent Kumaon. Its two major

features are a shrine for the worship of a major deity and subsidiary deities, and human oracles *(dhāmi)* who speak for them. The oracles are believed to embody the god *(Maṣṭā)* and are treated with all the respect due an *avatār*. Through his oracles the god is sought for advice of all kinds, but most characteristically he is valued as an arbitrator and a means for rectifying unjust decisions.

Gaborieau's study is of special interest methodologically. Instead of concentrating on a single locality or community and studying the god, his oracles, the shrine and its social organization in this limited context, he studies the *Maṣṭā* cult throughout a region, seeking variations and constant thema. Moreover, he brings to the study not only a knowledge of Nepāli but of Kumaoni and Sanskrit, including the literature of the latter. Among the valuable results of this kind of study is enhanced historical insight in a region where historical documentation is scanty and perception of continuities between elements in the local cult and elements in the Great Tradition of Hinduism are limited.

The music of a caste *(Damai)* who are musicians as well as tailors is of great importance in the cult. For music provided by the Damai is the means by which the *dhāmi* sheds his ordinary self and becomes an embodiment of a deity. Gaborieau notes that the music varies according to the deity to be made manifest. Gaborieau found that some major shrines were foci for a geographical scattering of subsidiary shrines. For the administration and ritual activities of each shrine a hierarchical social organization was present, with the status of *dhāmi* as one of the elements. This hierarchical organization - both geographical and social - reflects and is congruent, in one direction, with caste hierarchy in the community and, in another direction, with spirit hierarchy in the other world.

To depict the *dhāmi* complex in Far Western Nepal, Walter F. Winkler utilizes a panel of six spirit mediums, or oracles, he knew especially well. Besides a female the group included representatives from five different caste groups, ranging in status from priestly Brahman to a tailor member of the Untouchable category. Because of the size and variety of the panel, he can suggest qualifications and shading, or state generalizations with assurance, as the case may be. The essay complements Gaborieau's, where the point of departure is a single deity and his cult. Winkler's focus is on the role of spirit medium *(dhāmi)*. The difference in perspective is valuable because it highlights slightly different features of a very similar complex - a complex strongly influenced by Hinduism whose central feature in both regions is a temple oracle, associated with a hierarchical pantheon and social organization. Winkler's interests lead him to depict in more detail the variety of social contexts in which the *dhāmi* functions. The two essays also are geographically complementary,

and the most notable difference emerging when pantheons of the two regions are compared, is the widespread importance of lineage deities *(kul deutā)* in the Far West, a difference Winkler attributes to different histories of Hindu immigration. Winkler also found that subsidiary deities (called *ān-bān*, corresponding to the *bāhan* of Gaborieau's region) had a much more active and established role, and gave their spirit-mediums corresponding prominence.

When discussing these subsidiary deities, Winkler reveals they have a most interesting function in conflict situations. An aggrieved person makes a promise to benefit an *ān-bān* in some way, and usually makes the promise in the presence of the *dhāmi* who represents the deity. The purpose of the promise is to persuade the *ān-bān* to afflict an opponent, and since the deity does not afflict the innocent, this custom, even though the promise is made in secret, becomes an effective way of bringing pressure to bear on wrong-doers.

Besides acting in this social context and as an oracle in the social organization of a temple, the *dhāmi* is asked to perform in the home as a curer, or to utilize his aura of godhead in helping keep the peace between rival factions at large festival gatherings. Sometimes more than one *dhāmi* is asked to perform in a home and Winkler remarks on the rivalry this situation generates.

The *dhāmi* who act in the above social context already have attained recognition and legitimacy. Winkler also discusses the kind of social situation from which *dhāmi* arise and it is of interest that four of the six on his panel come from backgrounds of personal or family unhappiness.

Johan Reinhard's essay discusses shamanism among a previously nomadic group of Southern Nepal. Showing influence from their Tharu neighbours, they call their shamans *garau*. Quite unlike the *dhāmi* described by Winkler, the *garau* pass through no unusual psychic experience as an indication of their calling and over eighty percent of all males are initiated, though only a few continue to practice. An unusual feature of the complex is the way shamans function as part of a *jajmāni*-like system, receiving annual payments from client villages where they perform ceremonies for the whole community. Because of its attention to this and other economic details, including the way shamans manipulate the spirit world for their economic advantage, Reinhard's essay presents a very useful picture of shamanism in relation to practitioners' means of livelihood.

Among the Raji we encounter our first description of fire-walking to show the power of tutelary deities, and of blood-letting by cutting the body and piercing the tongue in order to appease them. The usual séance, however, is relatively simple, and the

shaman wears no special attire. In these respects the Raji shamans are not unlike shamans among the Magar of Central Nepal (see Hitchcock and Hitchcock 1966b).

Witch belief often is a somewhat covert part of Nepali life, in part because of legal sanctions (see Macdonald's essay in this volume). Nevertheless is is extremely pervasive and Reinhard's essay, by depicting its centrality in one community undoubtedly provides an indication of its role in many others throughout the country.

The Raji are being affected by the heavy emigration from the hills to the low-lying Terai, a region recently made habitable by malaria control. As a result they are increasingly influenced by Hindu agriculturalists. Reinhard reveals how important an acculturative role the Raji shaman plays in this situation.

In section III we include articles by Corneille Jest and A.W. Macdonald, both of whom have done pioneer research in Nepal and related areas. The article by Macdonald was translated from the French and is one of the first articles published on the subject matter of this book. Although the data comes from an area outside Nepal, it deals with the activities of the *jhākri* in Nepali-speaking populations and is the earliest attempt to delineate in detail the role of the *jhākri* in Nepali religion. Jest's article complements many of the articles in this volume in that he offers glimpses of various shamans (whom he prefers to call 'intercessors') among a wide variety of groups - the Lepcha of Kalimpong, the Thakali and Magar of western Nepal, the Nepali speakers of Chainpur-Bajhang in western Nepal, and the Tibetans of northwestern Nepal. Jest's data adds to our knowledge of similarities and differences in possession, soul journey, and exorcism in widely scattered areas of the Himalayas.

The final section deals with spirit possession in the literate tradition, among Tibet-orientated peoples of Nepal and in the Nepali Code of Jang Bahadur Rana in the 19th century. The first article by Aziz describes the nature of spirit possession among reincarnate lama of Tibetan Buddhism. In the past, according to Aziz, spirit possession and shamanism in Tibetan Buddhism received only a cursory examination through the study of state oracles and the like. They were treated as 'remnants' of an earlier shamanic practice. She argues that the reincarnate lama is spirit possessed and can be considered as a kind of shaman. It might appear startling to scholars of Buddhism and Tibet to see the reincarnate lama described as a 'shaman' or be dealt with as 'possessed by a spirit', but Aziz seems to make a good case. Certainly, few can deny the similarities between reincarnation and spirit possession. Both are forms of 'possession'. As Jones points out in his introductory article, it is the duration of possession and conceptualization of the spirit that enters the body that differs.

The reincarnate lama is 'possessed for life' so to speak, while the shaman typically undergoes periodic possession with stated purposes. The spirit that possesses a lama is usually the spirit of a deceased member of the Tibetan community, while the spirit that possesses a shaman varies considerably from nature spirits of the forests and tutelary divinities, to gods and goddesses who may never have assumed corporeal form.

The paper by William Stablein might at first seem out of place in a volume on spirit possession and shamanism. Stablein is, after all, discussing the activities of a priest of Tantric Buddhism, in this case the vajramaster of the Mahākāla *pujā*. Two justifications can be given for its inclusion. First, Stablein argues that a vajramaster is a descendant of the shaman. He is a shaman transmuted by generations of immersion in a sophisticated, highly literate religious tradition. Second, and perhaps most pertinent to this volume, the vajramaster and the Mahākāla *pūjā* help us to see more clearly what shamanism is and what it is not. They do this by offering a contrast. By his sensitive delineation of the *pūjā* symbolism, Stablein helps us to comprehend how much of the total culture material the *pūjā* brings to the presence of the vajramaster - so that he may transform it into a spiritually beneficient 'medicine' for the devotee. The shaman, too, sacralizes certain substances. He transforms barley dough figures, for example, into offerings acceptable to a deity or spirit. But even at their most complex, one can hardly say that the Nepali shamanic rituals transfigure a total way of life. A shaman does not call upon a spirit *and* a long line of those who have served that spirit. For the shaman a spirit is a means to an end. The shaman 'masters' the spirit on behalf of his client. For the vajramaster the aim is not mastery but union, and as a corollary the process of spirit-association is more reverent. This difference suggests another, which is one of the most significant contrasts between the shaman and the vajramaster. In shamanic possession, the spirit and the shaman remain separate. This must be so if the shaman is to master the spirit. In contrast, the relation between the vajramaster and Mahākala is one of apotheosis. The spirit *becomes* the vajramaster, 'like water flowing into water' More than any other author in the volume, Stablein has attempted to learn another religion 'from the inside', by directly experiencing it. He tells us of the kind of insight the method of understanding helped him achieve.

The final article in this section and in the volume is a translation of A.W. Macdonald's article in French, which was a translation and commentary on sorcery in the Nepali Code of 1853. The article is a translation of parts of the Jang Bahadur Rana Code of the 19th century that deals with sorcery, witchcraft, and the activities of shamans (in this case *jhākri* or *dhāmi*). Macdonald notes that in the Code the two are treated as one and the same. Both are described as healers who cure with the help of personal supernatural powers.

Most of the translation deals with the type of punishment given to those who wrongly accuse people of being 'sorcerers' *(boksa)* or 'witches' *(boksi)*. Of especial interest is the nature of the proof required in detecting witches. The Code seems to indicate that the only acceptable proof in the detection of witches is for the shaman *(jhãkri/dhãmi)* to first brand the client under attack by a witch and cause him/her to dance, which will also cause the witch to be branded and dance. In such cases it is deemed acceptable to chase the witch from village to village. All other forms of witchcraft accusations, either by a shaman or a non-specialist, are deemed to be unacceptable, and the accusers are subject to various punishments by fine, imprisonment or exile. The Code also contains some interesting details governing inter-caste curing practices as well as treatment of women by male shamans. The article adds historical depth to our efforts to understand the magico-religious phenomena discussed and shows that the government of Nepal has long recognized the importance of these phenomena in the lives of most Nepalis.

In fairness to our authors we must emphasize, as we agreed to do, that most essays are to be regarded as work in progress, as stimuli to further research, and as indications of how much information still remains to be gathered.

John T. Hitchcock
Kathmandu, Nepal
April, 1975

I

SPIRIT POSSESSION AND SOCIETY IN NEPAL

Definitions and Classifications

Spirit possession in Nepal is not unique. Anthropologists and others have encountered it throughout the world. This paper is a preliminary attempt at understanding some of the sociological implications of spirit possession within the Nepal setting, through a definition and classification based on the information presented in the articles of this volume. This is followed by an analysis of some possible functions of spirit possession in Nepal and elsewhere in the world.

Spirit possession can be defined *as an altered state of consciousness on the part of an individual as a result of what is perceived or believed to be the incorporation of an alien form with vital and spiritual attributes, e.g. the spirit of a superhuman form such as a witch, sorcerer, god, goddess, or other religious divinity.* By this definition only the Gurung priests, of all those described in this volume, are exempt from my initial classification of spirit possession. Even the *vajra* priest of Tibetan Buddhism described by Stablein should be included here since he temporarily 'assumes' an 'altered state of consciousness' through his incorporation of an 'alien form'. He is described by Stablein as a 'living metaphor' of spirit possession.

In the above definition we are able to see the close relationship between spirit possession as an altered form of consciousness and parapsychology of western European conceptualization. In the West, we often described people as being in a 'state of altered consciousness' in our everyday lives. What is more, we frequently attribute misfortune and disease to this 'consciousness', in other words, we give it *causation* which is similar to a Nepali attributing causation to a spirit and attributing misfortune and disease to that spirit. For example, we in the United States and Europe might attribute the cause of an auto accident to a drunken driver who 'fell asleep' or 'was daydreaming'. Is this so vastly different from someone attributing an auto accident to a person whose 'consciousness' temporarily left him and was replaced by a 'spirit' or a different form of consciousness? The difference lies in the fact that we usually, and I stress usually, do not believe in 'spirits' or 'ghosts' or at least we do not verbalize

our perceptions of the world in this way. Among Americans and Europeans the concepts 'drunkeness' or 'daydreaming' or 'falling asleep' are 'natural' phenomena while spirits are 'unnatural' or 'supernatural' phenomena. Yet we know about as much about these 'states of consciousness' as we do about spirits, which is very little. What is 'daydreaming'? What is 'sleep'? What is 'drunk'? Temporarily, we must accept the idea that the primary difference between a person attributing form and causation to a 'spirit' as opposed to 'daydreaming' or 'sleep' or 'drunkeness' is a matter of conceptualization and verbalization. We cannot scientifically differentiate 'natural' from 'supernatural' or 'sacred' from 'profane', or 'ordinary' from 'extraordinary'. The differentiation is a matter of language and metaphor.

In a recent book entitled, *Ecstatic Religion*, I.M. Lewis distinguishes between two types of spirit possession which he designates as 'peripheral' and 'central' possession. For Lewis (1971:32), 'peripheral possession' has the social function of an 'oblique aggressive strategy'. The possessed individual is able to manipulate his superiors without openly questioning their superiority. Lewis shows how this type of possession most often afflicts women who use it as a way in which they manipulate men and thus achieve a balance of power between men and women in societies where women are denied positions of power and authority. Peripheral possession is not the exclusive domain of women, however, and is used by men as well, in circumstances where they are unable to advance to positions of power as a result of economic or other historic conditions. 'Central possession' has the function of upholding and sustaining public morality (Lewis 1971:34). Unlike peripheral possession cults, central possession cults are openly used to uphold power and authority rather than subvert it. Lewis feels that 'central possession' persists mostly in small scale societies that are characterized by relatively fluid social units in particularly 'exacting physical conditions' or circumstances of political conquest and submission to alien systems of power.

In making the distinction noted above, Lewis (1971:28) is careful to point out that he is in no way claiming or necessarily implying that 'spirits are assumed to have no existential reality'. He feels that 'for those who believe in them, mystical powers are realities of both thought and experience'. He (1971:29) prefers to adopt the slogan 'Let those who believe in spirits and possession speak for themselves'. Lewis simply claims that spirit possession also has sociological functions in addition to its supposed 'existential reality'. It is on the latter that he focuses his analysis. With these latter statements I am in agreement. My own classification and analysis in the following pages has little to do with arguing for or against the validity or reality of spirit possession or the claims to which its believers uphold. I am merely attempting to point out some possible functions that these beliefs may have, other than those claimed by the believers.

Although I am in basic agreement with Lewis' claim that spirit possession has sociological functions, I do not adhere firmly to his analysis nor to his two-fold classification. The phrase 'peripheral possession', I feel, has merit, and I believe that Lewis' analysis of this phenomena is the best part of his book. In the classification and analysis to follow I make use of this phrase with little change in meaning. However, I am not in agreement with Lewis' treatment of central possession cults and especially in his claims that central possession functions to uphold public morality in small, fluid communities. The data in the articles presented in this book do not bear this out. We find 'central possession cults' in such highly stratified societies as India, Nepal and Tibet and it is not always associated with public morality, or political reactions to social change. My classification and analysis attempts to elaborate on this classification and point to different functions than those presented by Lewis. It should be noted, however, that Lewis (1971:36) himself was in no way 'wedded' to the terms 'peripheral' and 'central' possession. He recognized explicitly a need for further analysis and research.

Most of the articles in this volume deal specifically with 'central possession', touching only occasionally upon cases of 'peripheral possession'. The exception is the beginning article by Shirley Kurz Jones, who describes such a case as an illustration of Lewis' hypothesis that peripheral possession frequently functions as a form of social protest in raising one's status in the community or as an access to denied prestige, goods and the like.

Four types of spirit possession in the Nepal Himalaya can be distinguished on the basis of time and space. Borrowing Lewis' term 'peripheral possession' to define the type of possession that is not necessarily defined in terms of a particular time or particular space, I am able to distinguish this type of possession from three other types. I have chosen the terms *reincarnate possession*, *tutelary possession*, and *oracular possession* to designate these three types. Reincarnate possession is of the type described by Aziz. Possession is for life and therefore in terms of this-wordly attributes is 'timeless'. To put it simply, time is undesignated. An individual reincarnates the spirit of a deceased individual and then takes up residence in a monastery or religious centre. He becomes, as a result of his reincarnate status, a focus of power in divination, ritual, curing, healing and predicting and allaying misfortune. He is a full-time religious practitioner, centred in a religious institution or designated 'sacred' space. He differs from what we might normally call a priest in that he achieves his position primarily as a result of his possession or reincarnate status and not through hereditary succession or study. Anyone, theoretically, in Tibetan society can become a reincarnate lama.

Tutelary possession is just the opposite of reincarnate possession. Time is designated but space is not. An individual calls upon a tutelary spirit during a seance or ritual to possess him or take over his body for the duration of the ritual or ceremony. The individual, however, is never relegated to an institution such as a church, temple or monastery. His possession is periodic and specific, but the place in which he conducts his activities as a result of possession is sporadic and unspecified and is determined solely by individual choice or situational demands. It might be in someone's home, in a forest, or field, or at a cemetery or place of burial. Most of the cases of possession described in this volume are of this type. The Limbu *phedangma*, the Sunuwar *puimbo*, the Nepali *jhãkri*, are a few examples. We have generally labelled these individuals 'shamans', about which I will have more to say later.[1]

Oracular possession is distinguished from reincarnate possession on the basis of time and from tutelary possession on the basis of space. It is the direct opposite of peripheral possession in that both time and space are designated. An individual becomes possessed by a spirit, a god or goddess on designated occasions such as a village ceremony, a curing séance or a ceremony of divination. His possession invariably takes place in a designated sacred space such as a temple, a church or a monastery. In this volume the *dhāmi* of western Nepal, described by Gaborieau and Winkler, best fits the description of oracular possession.[2] The *dhāmi* of the west generally becomes possessed in a village temple or near a temple where he serves as an oracle medium for a god. The god speaks through him on ceremonial occasions. Thus he again resembles the priest, but he achieves his position through possession by the god and only secondarily through inheritance or study.

Peripheral possession has been mentioned and its functions analyzed in more detail by Lewis (1971). The occasion of possession is seemingly spontaneous. It might happen only once in a lifetime or on a number of occasions, but the community is seldom able to predict its occurrence, nor is the individual who becomes possessed. It is uncontrollable. Furthermore, the place is undesignated. It could happen anywhere and at any time. Time and space are undesignated.

Here we might mention that the term shaman, in the literature, is generally applied to an individual who resembles the priest but who achieves his status primarily through 'possession', 'ecstasy' or the 'trance'. Although Eliade has chosen to use the word in defining an individual who is capable of 'soul journey' or 'magical flight', empirically this is seldom, if ever, the case. As noted by Lewis (1971) even Siberian Tungus shamans, where we in anthropology borrowed the term, become possessed by tutelary spirits. I think it useful to limit the term shaman to

individuals who either become possessed by a tutelary spirit ('controlled possession') or who are capable of 'magical flight' or 'soul journey' through the trance.[3] We are able to distinguish the shaman from other kinds of religious practitioners on the basis of time and space outlined above. Shamans differ primarily from oracle mediums or reincarnate lamas in that they are not confined to a sacred space or an institution such as a temple or church. Although possession is the source of power for all three types, where and when possession occurs differs considerably sociologically. By using the dimensions of time and space in terms of my definition of spirit possession, I am able to make clear these distinctions.

Spirit possession as a phenomenon can be diagrammed according to the dimension I have outlined.

		Space	
		undesignated	designated
Time	undesignated	Peripheral Possession	Reincarnate Possession
	designated	Tutelary Possession	Oracular Possession

Each category of possession is differentiated from the other in the above diagram according to the dimensions of time and space. Peripheral possession is defined as possession where time and space are both undesignated. Oracular possession is defined as the direct opposite where both time and space are designated. Reincarnate possession is defined as possession where time is undesignated but space is designated. Tutelary possession, or shamanism, is defined as possession where time is designated but space is not.

In this somewhat simplistic classification, I feel that I have considerably improved on Lewis' distinction between 'peripheral' and 'central possession' while at the same time I have more effectively distinguished the shaman from his religious counterparts, the oracle medium, the priest or the reincarnate lama. Furthermore, we are better able to deal with the descriptions given by the contributors of this book. It should be understood that the articles in the volume do not necessarily follow the definitions given or the classification. These were made after reviewing the articles in their entirety. Many, such as Aziz and Stablein, have described and organized their material somewhat differently and have characterized oracle mediums and reincarnate lamas as 'shamans'. Indeed, they are 'like shamans', but using the above outlined criteria we are able to perceive important differences. The reincarnate lama is like a shaman in that 'controlled possession' is central to their status and power, but

they are different in that one is possessed for life and the other is possessed on occasion. The vajramaster, described by Stablein, is 'like a shaman' in that he is a 'living metaphor' of possession, but he differs in that his 'possession' is geared to a specific time, the Mahākāla ritual, and a sacred space, at a temple or monastery.

On the basis of the definition and classification presented, the various religious practitioners described in this volume can be classified accordingly.

Peripheral possession:	the Limbu women as described by Shirley Kurz Jones; also those who have been 'sorcerized', 'witched' or become 'ill' as a result of spirit possession, frequently the shaman's patient, the client or a bystander at a séance.
Reincarnate possession:	the Tibetan reincarnate lama as described by Aziz *(tulku)* or touched upon by Messerschmidt among the Gurung, and Paul among the Sherpa.
Tutelary possession:	the Limbu *phedangma, samba, yeba, yema, mangba;* the Sunuwar *puimbo* or *ngiami;* the Thulung Rai *jhãkri;* the Magar, Chantel and Nepali *jhãkri;* the Raji and Tharu *gurau* of southern Nepal.
Oracular possession:	the Nepali *dhāmi* of western Nepal; the vajramaster of Tibetan Buddhism; Tibetan oracle mediums; the Satya Hangma ascetic of the Limbu.

Some Functions of Spirit Possession in Nepal

The foregoing definition and classification was made without specific reference to the sociological functions of spirit possession. In a sense, the fourfold classification was structural rather than functional and simply delineated relations between four distinctive types of spirit possession along the dimensions of space and time. I will now attempt to describe some different functions of these four types.

In speaking of the social functions of human behaviour and institutions, it is useful to adopt the distinction made by Merton (1957) between 'manifest' and 'latent' function. Manifest function has to do with intent while latent function is frequently unintended. In often used linguistic and anthropological terminology, manifest function is 'emic' while latent function is 'etic'.

To those who believe in spirit possession it provides a manifest function or 'emic' explanation of the causes and effects of illness and misfortune. Throughout Nepal, spirit possession is cited as a source of discontent as well as a means for resolving discontent. Illness and misfortune are attributed to a variety of supernatural forces such as attacks by witches, sorcerers, forest divinities, spirits of deceased individuals and angry gods or goddesses. People frequently recognize that human neglect is usually at the basis for supernatural discontent. For example, the failure to propitiate household or village gods and goddesses is frequently cited as the source of their anger, or as among the Limbu, human envy and jealousy leaves the individual or family open to attacks by witches or evil spirits. Through human failure and neglect supernatural forces are unleashed and bring chaos, disorder and disaster. These forces are combated, held in check or defeated by individuals who are capable of 'seeing' and identifying them. Such individuals receive their power primarily through successful encounters with supernatural forces in the past. Frequently, these encounters were violent as in the initial possession of the *jhãkri* (see Hitchcock, Sagant, MacDonald, Michl and Allen). Invariably, the contact is loaded with danger. The eventual control of this contact imbues the individual with power to diagnose, cure illness and rectify misfortunes that are caused by similar encounters. They become 'living metaphors', through controlled spirit possession, or contact with supernatural power.

The system of cause, effect and cure, is thus a circular and enclosed system of knowledge. The cause is a spirit, the effect is spirit possession, and the cure is controlled spirit possession. This system of knowledge provides the manifest function of explanation and control in the face of disorder, chaos and inexplicable circumstances. The social function here described is adaptive, or as described by Spiro (1966:120), it (spirit.possession) is the basis of 'social stability' in potentially unstable and disruptive social circumstances. It has the similar function that witchcraft beliefs, as described by Evans-Pritchard (1937:63-83), have for many African societies. It functions to 'explain unfortunate events' and thus stabilize social relations where doubt serves to disrupt them.

The system also seems to have other functions that are not nearly so apparent. As pointed out by Lewis (1971) and Kurz (in this volume), peripheral spirit possession provides a means for status achievement that is otherwise inaccessible to many people, especially women. In other words, the system of spirit possession not only functions as a system of explanation for misfortune and disaster, but it also functions as a means by which individuals are capable of achieving social positions and respect otherwise denied them. I feel that these latter, latent functions are related to the overall sociology of Nepal.

Throughout Nepal the caste system and ethnic pluralism operates to deny many individuals self-respect and prestige in the village setting. This is especially the case with lower castes such as metalworkers, tailors or leatherworkers. Frequently, these castes provide the village shaman or religious specialist who combats disease and misfortune through controlled spirit possession. In this way the avenue is open for such people to cross caste boundaries and gain self-respect and prestige. Spirit possession in all its forms is not limited to any particular class or caste. It is a sociologically 'open' system. This is not to say that it occurs with the same frequency among *all* classes and *all* castes, but simply that it is open to all. It is a recognized and frequently institutionalized means for social advancement.

In this fashion, the beliefs and institutions surrounding spirit possession fulfil the function, as noted by Spiro (1966:121) of providing 'a culturally approved means for the resolution of inner conflict (between personal desires and cultural norms) ...' Within the Nepal caste system many people are denied access to goods, wealth and prestige as a result of culturally prescribed norms. The institution of spirit possession within different contexts serves as a means for the satisfaction of personal wants and desires. Thus on one level it provides an explanation for social dissatisfaction and on another it channels it according to prescribed norms.

It is my contention that these latter more latent functions of spirit possession can be correlated to the four types of possession I have outlined above. I will now offer suggestions along these lines, keeping in mind that the data are still inadequate for a thorough treatment of this hypothesis.

I suggest that spirit possession in general occurs more frequently among those categories of people who are denied social statuses and traditional means for social advancement in Nepal society. This is especially the case with women in Nepal, who more frequently than any other social category, find themselves relegated to inferior positions in society with little or no hope of social and institutional advancement. Women of lower castes and tribes would by definition be in relatively inferior social positions to women of higher castes who, through marriage and education, are in positions of respect. Unmarried women, widows and women in servants' positions are more likely to become possessed by spirits than married women with children, a family and a successful marriage. Spirit possession, as pointed out by Lewis (1971), provides an 'oblique aggressive strategy' to such socially deprived categories of people.

Similarly, men of lower castes, or men without lands, titles or positions of authority seem more inclined to spirit possession than those of higher castes, with wealth and social position (see

especially Winkler in this volume). Spirit possession again provides an approved means for 'social protest'.

Peripheral spirit possession, or 'uncontrolled spirit possession', is functionally suited to social situations in which people are denied an access to the status and institutional hierarchy. Indeed *all* spirit possession in Nepal seems to begin in this fashion, as an 'uncontrollable' illness brought on by direct spiritual attack. Only in its later stages does it become 'controlled' through the achievement of a status position such as that of village shaman or curer, temple oracle medium or reincarnated lama. One would expect those subject to spirit possession in its initial stages to be most frequently those without wealth, position or institutionalized support for suffering, in short, those on the periphery of society - the landless, the widowed, the unmarried, the second and third born sons who are temporarily or permanently denied inheritance, and those of lower castes or tribes.

Most cases of spirit possession in this volume deal not with 'peripheral' spirit possession but 'controlled' spirit possession. I suggest that the latter is not so much a qualitatively different type of possession as it is an end product of a lengthy process of social advancement. It is functionally related to the statuses and institutions available to the disinherited.

Reincarnate possession is peculiarly adapted to Tibetan Buddhist society (see Aziz and Stablein in this volume). In such a society monastic institutions are the primary means of status achievement. In fact, it is frequently the only means.

Peoples of Nepal and Tibet who find themselves landless or without inherited wealth frequently turn to either one of two avenues of social advancement, trade or the monastery. The monastery especially serves the function of a 'retreat' for socially and economically deprived individuals. The reincarnated lama is the epitome of such deprivation, and it seems no accident that even the poorest Tibetan is capable of receiving such a reincarnate status. It is the Tibetan way of moving from 'rags to riches'.

Furthermore, wherever these monastic institutions begin to replace indigenous social structures, such as among the Sherpa or Gurung, we also find a decreasing emphasis on the prestige of the shaman or the individualized, charismatic and spontaneous curer, diviner or healer. Reincarnate possession seems especially adaptive to situations, such as Tibetan Buddhist society, where individual achievement is submerged into institutionalized achievement. Status in society is best gained through the monastery, and spirit possession is altered and incorporated into the monastic setting.

Tutelary possession is functionally related to situations where institutions *other* than the family or extended kingroup are absent. It provides a means for status achievement in the absence of complex institutions like the monastery or temple. It is especially adaptive to the isolated village settings of Nepal among Tibeto-Burman tribal groups or in areas where the complexities of Brahmanical Hinduism and Tibetan Buddhism have not intruded beyond the ideological level and where the village temple and its attendants give way to temporary, unkept shrines. In such areas the shaman through controlled spirit possession plays a primary role in the religion of the community, and the social position of the shaman is secondary to none (see Hitchcock in this volume). Thus tutelary possession in Nepal is found more often outside the densely populated areas, the bazaars, the towns or the cities of the Kathmandu valley (see Hitchcock, MacDonald, Michl, Allen, Fournier, Paul, Jones and Sagant in this volume).

Oracular possession is peculiarly adapted to societies such as those of Brahmanical Hinduism. It is more prevalent in western Nepal than the east and in the south than in the north (see Winkler and Gaborieau in this volume). In the Kathmandu valley it finds itself in sharp competition with the monastic influences of Buddhism, but it by no means takes second place. It provides a means for social advancement in the temple setting. Socially and economically deprived individuals can achieve status as an oracle medium within the confines of a caste society that is hierarchically arranged. Oracular possession is adaptive to complex societies where status positions are hereditary and rigidly defined. In this sense, this type of spirit possession in Hindu Nepal bears a close relationship to the oracles of the classical slave societies of Greece and Rome where women and slaves were denied traditional positions of authority and power in the society at large but could achieve them through the oracle.

In this short paper I have not attempted to answer the question 'why does spirit possession exist?' I have quite simply attempted to offer some reasons as to why it persists and how it is adaptive within the complex society of Nepal. I have suggested that four types of spirit possession can be discerned along the structural dimensions of time and space and that these four types appear to serve a two-fold function. On the one hand the belief in spirit possession provides answers and explanations for unfortunate events, disasters and misfortunes brought about by disease, pestilence, poverty and social conflict. On the other hand it functions as a means for the resolution of these unfortunate events due to the accident of birth and a denial of status.

The four types of spirit possession that I have outlined above on the basis of structural relations of time and space seem to have functional meanings as well. Each is adaptive to the

cultural complexities of Nepal where we find a meeting ground of indigenous tribals, Hindu castes and Tibetan Buddhists. In this cultural and social complexity those who are denied prestige, social position, wealth, authority and power unconsciously turn to oblique forms of social protest and status achievement through spirit possession.

Rex L. Jones

1. Johan Reinhard (in this volume) deals with some of the definitional problems of the terms 'shaman' and 'shamanism' I do not think my classification and analysis here detracts from the points he makes.

2. It should be noted that the term *dhāmi* in the east of Nepal is used differently than in the west. In the east a *dhāmi* becomes possessed and aided by a tutelary spirit but is not assigned to a temple or particular shrine. He functions much like a *jhākri*. Indeed, the two terms in the area where I worked *(dhāmi/jhākri)* were occasionally used interchangeably.

3. Reinhard (in this volume) concludes with a similar point of view from a different analytical framework.

II

SHAMANISM AND SPIRIT POSSESSION - THE DEFINITION PROBLEM

The reader in examining the way the word shaman is used in contributions to this volume will soon become aware that there is considerable variation in meanings attributed to the term. This is to be expected, as it simply reflects the general confusion in the literature regarding what is, and is not, considered to be shamanism. In the following remarks I can only briefly touch on a few of the many interesting aspects of shamanism and problems which arise in trying to define this phenomenon. Nonetheless, it is hoped that this paper will help in increasing awareness of some of the issues involved, so that misunderstandings may be avoided in the future.[1]

Defining words is certainly one of the most thankless tasks in science. A few always will disagree or find the definition in some way wanting. Indeed my personal inclination is to agree with Popper (Magee 1973:49; cf. also Turner 1964:324) that in many cases debates over the meanings of terms stand in the way of, rather than assist, the growth of science. Numerous words have proven effective in spite of their ambiguity (e.g. energy). However, on some occasions clarification of a term appears both of considerable value in advancing development in theory and necessary in avoiding confusion among scholars working in the same, or similar, fields. Some go so far as to believe that science *is* the art of defining terms.

Whatever the case may be, clearly defined terms obviously allow improved communication and comparability. Although I will not deal in detail with formal rules of definition here - indeed for practical reasons I will even later fail to follow these rules to the letter - some points should be mentioned. If possible, to avoid confusion, a new definition should not be too dissimilar to one already attributed to the term in popular and scientific literature. It should be applied with consistency and precision to the word so that others can decide if the phenomenon they are examining should be designated by the term. The definition ideally should contain unambiguous words requiring no further explication and contain all, and only, those elements considered to be essential to the phenomenon. The term should not be defined so precisely that it applies only to the specific context within which it

originates; for then it cannot be applied to similar phenomena elsewhere.

Now often in definitions no attempt is made to arrive at the true essence of the phenomenon being defined, but rather to establish a convention governing the use of signs (Opp 1970:96). With some terms the debate is simply concerned with what convention should be accepted, the original use of the term or essence of the phenomenon being ignored. Indeed there is difficulty in ever arriving at the essence of a phenomenon, especially if this involves historical interpretation and associating the essence with the term being defined. It is precisely this issue that lies at the root of the problem in defining shamanism, as we shall soon see.

In some of the general dictionaries and anthropological textbooks, the term 'shaman' is defined so generally that no elements differentiate it from words referring to many other religious practitioners. For example in *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language* (Stein 1973:1310) 'shaman' is defined as 'a medicine man; one acting as both priest and doctor, who works with the supernatural'.[2] Keesing (1958:431) in a general anthropology textbook, defines 'shaman' as 'an individual religious expert'. The term is used in these, and numerous other sources (e.g. Jacobs 1964:64; Gove 1971:2086) in such a general and vague way that it serves little scientific purpose.

Although by no means the first to deal directly with the problem of defining shamanism, it is to the lasting credit of Eliade (1964) that in his monumental work on shamanism, he organized and summarized disparate sources of information on shamanistic phenomena throughout the world and divorced the use of the word 'shaman' from the very general connotation it had received in popular works. Eliade (1964:5) came perhaps closest to a statement of what he considers the minimal elements necessary in a definition of 'shaman' when he stated 'the shaman specializes in a trance during which his soul is believed to leave his body and ascend to the sky or descend to the underworld!'. It is this definition, or one similar in form, which has come to be used by numerous scholars, and this may be largely attributed to the influence of Eliade (viz. Vajda 1964; Dumont and Pocock 1959 b; Hoffman 1967:108).

However, when we examine other definitions which have appeared in anthropological works, we frequently encounter quite different viewpoints. In *Notes and Queries in Anthropology* (1951:181) a basic fieldwork manual in anthropology, we find this definition: 'The condition of possession is typical of the medicinemen of the Siberian arctic region, who are called shamans. The term has been applied generally for spirit possession of priests, and the manifestations have come to be called shamanism'. Firth, in *'A*

Dictionary of Social Sciences (1964:638) states: 'The most general usage of shaman denotes a specialist in healing, divination and allied social functions, allegedly by techniques of spirit possession and spirit control'. In a recent book on shamanism and spirit possession, Lewis (1971:51) defines a shaman as 'a person of either sex who has mastered spirits and who can at will introduce them into his own body'. Numerous other authors could be cited using similar definitions (Winick 1956:481; Rahmann 1959: 751; Beattie and Middleton 1969:xvii). Since Eliade (1964:499) explicitly rules out spirit possession as an essential element in the definition of 'shaman', why is there this discrepancy?

The term 'shaman' originated among the Tungus, and it was after studying shamanism and comparing it with similar phenomena in North Asia that Eliade (and others before him, e.g. Oesterreich (1921:305-9)) came to the conclusion that spirit possession does not characterize true shamanism. However, in his classic study of shamanism among the Tungus, Shirokogoroff (1935:269) gave a quite explicit definition of the word 'shaman'. 'In all Tungus languages this term refers to persons of both sexes who have mastered spirits, who at their will can introduce these spirits into themselves and use their power over the spirits in their own interests, particularly helping other people, who suffer from the spirits ...' He went on (1935:271-274) to list formal characteristics of Tungus shamanism, none of which mention the shaman's ability to undertake a soul journey. Again, why does the discrepancy between this definition and Eliade's exist? This is due to Eliade's 'historical' interpretation which is supposed to show that the soul journey aspect in prior times was of primary importance among the Tungus and spirit possession was a later development.

But here we begin to see problems in using 'historical' interpretations as a basis for arriving at the true essence of a phenomenon, let alone for the association of this essence with a particular word. For this is an enterprise fraught with difficulties, as any linguist will verify, even assuming written sources are available. The situation is, in brief, that there is a Tungus word, its ultimate origin and meaning uncertain, associated with a Tungus phenomenon, its ultimate origin and original form uncertain.

In his interpretation Eliade appears to have used two uncertainties to make a certainty: that the term 'shaman' was associated with a distinctive complex involving soul journey. It must be stressed here that this does not mean that his interpretation is wrong, although the evidence suggests that it is just as likely the word 'shaman' was associated with spirit possession as it is that it was associated with soul journey (viz. Shirokogoroff 1935:268-271; cf. Eliade 1964:495-496). It does mean that the factual evidence supporting the association of soul journey -

divorced from spirit possession - with the term 'shaman' is as yet unconvincing.

Without going into detail concerning Eliade's general approach to the study of religious phenomena, his interpretation of shamanism appears to have been influenced by his belief that the concept of a supreme heavenly deity existed in prior times among tribes in Asia, hence, necessitating a soul journey to the sky and later giving way to the concept of more mundane deities which came down to man, e.g. in spirit possession. (Eliade 1964:505-506). It would follow logically from this that soul journey preceded spirit possession, and herein lies the reason for the sub-title of his work, *'Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy'*. But the evidence for the starting point of such reasoning, namely the archaic religious ideology centred on faith in a supreme heavenly being, is certainly not more than an hypothesis based upon an interpretation of the few facts available to us about the beliefs of prehistoric man (see also Lewis 1971:50). It is interesting to note that Eliade bases his inferences about chronological age at least partly on such questionable criteria as quantity and universality, e.g. the more cultures found throughout the world possessing a trait, the older it must be.

Numerous scholars have pointed out that the influence of Western culture with its supreme deity concept has influenced tribes prior to, or during, the periods in which they were observed by Westerners even in cases where direct contact was failing. For this reason, among others, it seems extremely difficult to state with any certainty what tribal beliefs actually were in prehistoric times.[3]

In view of the above, if a distinct complex involving soul journey - but not spirit possession - exists in Asia (and some authors doubt this, see Lewis 1971:50-51; Findeisen 1960:213), it would seem unfortunate that the word 'shamanism' was used to denote it.[4] One scholar (Schröder 1955:862) has even adopted the interesting view that soul journey and possession are not contrasting, but rather are two aspects of the same reality.

In order to avoid further confusion in defining the term, we might wonder why the two phenomenon cannot be united in a single definition. One could then speak of a 'soul journey shamanism' and a 'possession shamanism' (see Haekel 1971:131). Furthermore, although soul journey was considered secondary, it did occur along with possession among the Tungus (Eliade 1964:500), and does so among many other tribes also (Lewis 1971:51). Indeed, several scholars have written in such a way that the two aspects can be subsumed in one definition (e.g. Stiglmayr 1957:163; Hirschberg 1965:384; Haekel 1971:131).

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a shaman. For example, if a person fulfilled all aspects except the social one, I would not consider him a shaman, because the shaman is most definitely a social functionary. The definition does not radically depart from previous definitions and has the advantage of incorporating two opposing viewpoints, thereby avoiding the confusion arising if only one of these was found to be acceptable. It is precise enough to be of use in comparative studies, and corresponds to the original use of the term among the Tungus. Above all it would seem to pass the crucial test of being able to aid a person in his decision as to whether or not the phenomenon he is studying should be labelled as shamanistic.

The definition is functionally oriented and as such is opposed to a definition involving elements of a distinctive complex, e.g. a formal initiation, particular attire and instruments, or the mythology concerning a first shaman, such as some authors (e.g. Vajda 1964) would like to see in reference to the soul journey complex of Siberia. Although it would undoubtedly be of considerable value to establish such a complex, as it would provide scholars with a model for examining other material, the reasons for not including such elements in the proposed definition should be obvious in view of the arguments and the definition guidelines stated above.

The alternative to a definition similar, if not the same, as the one outlined above, is a continuation of opposing schools of thought with resulting confusion for those not well versed in the issues involved. Hence although the definition I have presented is only one possible way of dealing with this complex definition problem, its acceptance hopefully would shift attention away from arguments concerning generalities, so that energies may be more fruitfully employed in a closer examination and analysis of the quite substantive differences that occur *within* what we have come to call shamanism.

Johan Reinhard

1. I would like to thank the Wenner-Gren Foundation for support received during the period in which this paper was written. Many of the ideas presented in this paper evolved during stimulating conversations with John Hitchcock, Andras Hõfer, Ake Hultkrantz, and Engelbert Stiglmayr. I would like to express my appreciation to these scholars for sharing their opinions with me. However, it should be stressed that they do not all agree with the conclusions set forth here.

   I might add that I by no means consider myself a shamanism expert in the sense of having worked with the literally thousands of sources dealing with the subject (although I have read several hundred of which only a few could be mentioned here). I take the, perhaps, heretical view that a person can perceive basic issues involved in a problem without being steeped in the material, as long as he is reasonably assured that this sample includes the variant viewpoints.

2. Some dictionaries (e.g. Stein 1973:1310) define shamanism as a religion of northern Asia. Such a view is certainly wrong, at least if one accepts the usual definition of religion (e.g. Malefijit 1968:12). Shamanism is only a part of religion, as there are always some religious activities in which the shaman does not have a part, religious beliefs unassociated with shamanism, other religious practitioners, etc. For further remarks in this regard see Shirokogoroff (1935: 276) and Stiglmayr (1962).

3. Two further reasons for questioning the evidence even from recent times regarding the number of cultures with beliefs in a supreme deity relate to problems of elicitation, translation and interpretation of native categories by Westerners and the so-called Galton's problem, where the general problem of the independence of different cultures is raised, aside from Western influences. (Pelto 1970:296-299).

. It should be noted here that Eliade has replied to those who criticized him for denying that possession is an element of shamanism. However, rather than re-examining the relationship of the word 'shaman' with the phenomena of soul journey and possession as found among the Tungus, he chose instead to argue the case largely on the basis that soul journey must have occurred prior to possession (Eliade 1961:155; cf. Eliade 1964:507, n.34). Presumably he feels it would add weight to his argument that soul journey also appeared prior to possession among the Tungus, although it is at least possible that the soul journey complex could have been 'borrowed' from other tribes after possession or for that matter that the combination of soul journey and possession could have been borrowed in whole (*viz.* Shirokogoroff 1935:

276-287; cf. however, Eliade 1964:498-502). To elaborate Eliade's arguments and reasons why I find them unpersuasive would require considerably expanding the present paper without contributing to the issues being raised here. For even if his arguments were convincing regarding both soul journey as being prior to possession in general and its being prior to possession among the Tungus, they still would have little to do with the problem of the appropriateness of applying the term 'shamanism' to either of these phenomena. He also argues (1961:155) that possession seems to be a secondary phenomenon in regions where 'shamanism' (read 'soul journey complex') occurs; another argument of little importance if the term 'shaman' was found primarily associated with possession among the Tungus. To summarize: the arguments for a distinctive soul journey complex in Asia are at times persuasive; the arguments that the term 'shamanism' should be applied to this complex are not.

In conversation with John Hitchcock (which took place after this article was written), it became clear that the word 'trance' is not a satisfactory term in some cases to denote the state that some shamans are in at the time they are possessed or have their souls undertake a journey to the spirit world. 'Trance' is frequently defined as a 'half-conscious state' (Stein 1973:1503), while what we are really trying to establish is that the shaman is in a non-ordinary psychic state, which in some cases means not a loss of consciousness but rather an altered state of consciousness. (The problem of faking is not of significance here, because the definition arises out of what the shaman says he does and acceptance of this by members of his society rather than what might in reality be taking place). Therefore, perhaps the phrase 'non-ordinary psychic state' should be substituted for 'trance'. Any more specific phrase or term would seem to present difficulties for the definition, and in any event the phrase is more precisely delineated by the remainder of the sentence.

One possible solution to this problem might be to delete the phrase 'into a trance' entirely. It might be viewed as being redundant, for spirit possession and soul journey would seem to automatically imply an unusual psychic state. However, it appears necessary to retain it, or some similar phrase, in the definition, because, even if people existed who believed a person's soul could journey while he remained in a perfectly normal state - and he otherwise fulfilled requirements of the definition - it would still be difficult to consider such a person a shaman. This would neither conform to definitions of shamanism found in major works in the field nor conform to shamanism among the Tungus. 'Shamanism' appears to be clearly associated with a non-ordinary psychic state, and this should, therefore, be stated in some way in the definition.

PART I
SPIRIT POSSESSION IN EASTERN NEPAL

A Thulung *jhãkri* resting after the jalim festival

III

LIMBU SPIRIT POSSESSION - A CASE STUDY

The interactive nature of anthropological fieldwork is often ignored in anthropological literature and by anthropologists who view their role as one of simple data collection. The entrance of the anthropologist into a closely-knit rural community is, in itself, an event which influences members of the community.

The anthropologist interacts daily with the people in the community. He or she becomes a member of the community and is assigned a status by each member of the community. Interaction takes place on the basis of the community's system of status and roles. Most ethnographic data is conditioned by this fact.

I will illustrate my point with an examination of a situation that occurred during fieldwork in 1967-1969 among the Limbu near Tehrathum bazaar in the eastern hills of Nepal. These events will illustrate the influence the fieldworker had on one individual - a Limbu woman employed as a cook and housekeeper. Although the employment provided her with an alternative means of income and some personal glorification through her association with the western 'sahibs', the new status was interpreted by her as one of a servant. During the period of employment, the cook was repeatedly possessed by a Limbu deity. This possession can be interpreted, at least in part, as a culturally prescribed response to the pressures she felt in a master-servant relationship. Others involved responded in a similar fashion through their changing interpretations of the reasons for possession.

A point made by I.M. Lewis is useful in interpreting the data which follow. In his recent book, *Ecstatic Religion* (1971), Lewis distinguished between two types of possession: peripheral possession, which occurs most frequently to individuals of low status; and central possession, which primarily occurs among higher-status individuals. Lewis hypothesized that peripheral possession provides a means by which individuals of low status can gain access to goods and rewards which they are ordinarily denied. As Lewis maintains (1971:117): 'Those men and women who experience these afflictions do so regularly in situations of stress and conflict with their superiors, and, in the attention and respect which they temporarily attract, influence their masters. Thus adversity is turned to advantage, and spirit

possession of this type can be seen to represent an oblique strategy of attack'.

Kanchi's[1] *possession*

Upon arriving in Tehrathum my husband and I contacted a locally-influential Limbu, who provided us with a house and located a Limbu woman to be our cook and housekeeper. I will call her Kanchi. Although we had initially planned a brief stay in the Tehrathum area, we decided after a few months to make it our permanent investigation site. One of the basic reasons for this decision was the high degree of rapport we established with the Limbu of the surrounding villages. The ease with which we entered the Limbu community was made possible largely because of our relationship with Kanchi, who for many months was not only our chief informant but provided us with an introduction to the nearby Limbu, almost all of whom were related to her in one way or another, either through descent or by marriage.

Kanchi's influence on our fieldwork for the first six months was pervasive. We became extremely involved in her personal life, and in addition to all she could tell us or lead us to, she herself became a chief focus of observation. Shortly after we settled in Tehrathum, she became possessed by a Limbu deity, Yuma Sammang. Her possession set off a series of events that were interpreted by the community as a 'call' to become a female shaman, or a *yuma*.[2]

Kanchi was then living in the homestead of her husband, who had left Tehrathum for Assam six years earlier, largely due to a love affair with his elder brother's wife. Most of her husband's close male kin were also living in Assam, and as a result Kanchi lived alone with her two children. She shared many household and farm responsibilities with two other women who had married into the patrilineage and who lived in an adjacent house. Their household was also without men. One woman was widowed, and the other's husband was in government service in Ilam. Both households were extremely poor. Kanchi's poverty was made evident by the simple fact that she became our cook, a position not ordinarily taken except by the poorest of Limbu. Kanchi was further handicapped because she was an orphan, raised by her mother's brother, and therefore did not have the option to return to her natal community, which is the usual course of action taken by Limbu women in her circumstance. In addition to her poverty, her children seemed to be suffering from an inadequate diet, and she complained that she had been forced to sell all her valuables to pay for illnesses in the family.

Although her position as our cook gave her material rewards, she was forced to do work she basically considered degrading. She

frequently expressed her distaste at doing 'servant's work', and once said it made her feel like a 'Newari', another ethnic group in the area amongst whom it is common for lower-class women to work as servants. In addition, her work was made more difficult because she had to cope with our standards of cleanliness, as well as other culturally conditioned wants and desires.

We first learned of her possession about two months after she began work for us. It began in the morning, shortly after she began her day's work. She had seemed distracted and argumentative all morning, asking for a loan of two months' pay, which we refused. She then went to get water and took more than the usual time. Finally, a relation of hers, with whom I had daily contact, came to tell me that Kanchi was 'ill' and had been found 'shaking' in her house. The woman asked me if I knew what was wrong with her. I told her that I didn't and went immediately to Kanchi's house. There were several women outside her house, who again asked me if I knew what was wrong with Kanchi. I went inside her house with one of the women who lived next to her. I found her upstairs in front of a small altar she had constructed. It consisted of a cleaned space on the floor, about one foot square, upon which were arranged a pile of hot coals, two brass dishes containing burning oil, and two branches of a plant *(tito pāti)*,[3] which I later learned had mystical cleansing properties and which is used by Limbus to ritually cleanse themselves after a funeral. Kanchi was sitting on the floor, shaking violently and chanting rhythmically, mostly in Limbu, which I did not understand sufficiently to interpret. At several points, she burned some of the leaves of the plant on the pile of coals. After half an hour, Kanchi stopped shaking and said, 'Enough!' (in Nepāli) and then turned around, asking, 'Where, where do I sit? Why?', to which the woman with me answered, 'Yuma Sammang'. I then went outside with the woman and Kanchi resumed her chanting. After another fifteen minutes Kanchi joined us, seemingly in good spirits. She brought out a bottle of home brew liquor *(raksi)* and gave some to the four or five women who had gathered around her house. Finally, we returned to my house. On the way home Kanchi seemed to bounce along, remarking that her feet hurt. As the day passed Kanchi was argumentative and forgetful of the early morning events. She did, however, remember being 'sick' and complained of her feet hurting and of being cold.

Several days after the incident, Kanchi and I had a conversation during which she described her possession by Yuma Sammang, a Limbu high goddess (see Jones in this volume). I asked her if Yuma Sammang came to her because she had sinned. She replied, 'I am good, but once in a while I get a little crazy *(bahulā)*.' She said Yuma Sammang comes upon her shoulders and upper body; she is all around her; and she talks to her. She shivers. Yuma Sammang asks her, 'Why have you eaten polluted food *(juṭho)*?'

The next incidence of her possession of which we were aware occurred one week later. She arrived at our house at six a.m. She was visibly shaken, and upon questioning, said that she had been possessed all night long the previous night. She attempted to perform some simple household tasks and complained of being very cold. Her nine year old daughter came over to wash the dishes, although Kanchi usually did them herself. Soon after, Kanchi ran out of the house, carrying a bottle of oil. She ran to her house, followed by her next door neighbour. On this occasion, I saw her partially construct an altar similar to the one she had set up on the previous occasion. Upon arrival at her house, Kanchi picked up a brass vase, and bounded out of her house towards the local water fountain. Her neighbour told me that she had gone to get some pure water so that she could *lipnu* (smear the floor with cowdung) where the altar would be. Kanchi came back with the water and put it inside the house. In a moment, she again came out of her house and went bounding up the trail towards the bazaar. She came back carrying some *tito pāti* in one hand and an unidentified plant in the other, entered her house, and went upstairs. Shortly thereafter, I followed her, accompanied by her neighbour, and watched her as she set out the bowls of oil, lit them and put *tito pāti* onto the burning coals. The rest of the session lasted approximately forty-five minutes. It consisted primarily of chanting and shaking as previously described. At the end of this period, Kanchi said, 'Finished!' and rolled over. We all went downstairs, and as on the previous occasion, she shared a bottle of homemade liquor with the women who had gathered at her house.

We returned home, and in a conversation between Kanchi and myself, she described the events of the morning and the previous evening. She said that last night she had gone to a nearby house (where she often stopped to drink liquor) and there met a shaman *(phedangma)*. They left together and went to Kanchi's house where they were both possessed by Yuma Sammang. In response to a question that I asked, Kanchi said that she remembered everything that happened during the night and during the possession previously described. She claimed that when she walked while possessed her feet did not touch the ground. At this time she interpreted her possession as an indication that she would 'become a *yuma*'. She described the altar she had made and said that Yuma Sammang eats *tito pāti*. Kanchi said that when she eats *juṭho* food herself she must also eat *tito pāti*. At one point during the conversation an old Limbu woman wandered in and remarked that Kanchi was poor and had no mother or father. She said that when Kanchi had started to shake the night before, she had taken her to her house where they stayed until nearly midnight.

Throughout this period, we were extremely solicitous of Kanchi. In the beginning, she was in good spirits about the possessions, and we spent hours discussing them with her. Her 'call' became

the focus of our interaction with her, making her somewhat of a celebrity, not only with us, but also with the neighbouring Limbu. As the possessions increased in intensity and number, we required less work of her, because she appeared physically and emotionally drained. We also gave her extra food and other gifts, and took more responsibilities regarding her children.

Gradually, after about three weeks, her possessions became less frequent. She became more careful in avoiding pollution *(juṭho)*, trying to eat and drink only what she or her close family cooked. She particularly avoided food at funeral ceremonies, saying this would make her 'shake'. Over the next four months, Kanchi became possessed at least three times that I knew about, and possibly other times that I did not. The conclusion of the episode, for us at least, coincided with her husband's return from Assam. After much indecision, Kanchi and her two children went back to Assam with him. Before she left, she gave a sacrifice to Yuma Sammang of two pigs we had given her. She claimed that the sacrifice was necessary in order to pacify the angry goddess and prevent further possessions. She began to re-interpret her 'illness' as the result of faulty ritual behaviour, rather than a shamanic summons. A consensus of support came from the Limbu community, many of whom noted in retrospect that her brother-in-law had also been possessed by Yuma Sammang in the past. They began to attribute both illnesses to improper performance of household rituals.

Some Comparative Data

Kanchi's possession, although somewhat different and occurring under unusual circumstances, was not unique among the Limbu. The following case is a further indication that spirit possession among the Limbu of low status functions as an 'oblique strategy of attack'.

Shortly before we left Tehrathum, another Limbu woman became possessed, not by the spirit of a deity, but by the spirit of her recently deceased mother-in-law. Sahili, as I will call this woman, lived near us and worked carrying water and washing dishes for several residents of the bazaar. Sahili's husband, Sahila, was a shaman but generally regarded as inefficient and unreliable. He drank much of the time, which also hampered his work and reputation.

One month before Sahili was possessed, Sahila's mother and his sister's daughter had been killed in a landslide on the first day of the Dasaĩ festival. It had been raining heavily for three days, and on the third night, the family went to bed without finishing their rice and meat (it was found unharmed in the rubble). That night a landslide covered the house, killing the

old woman and her granddaughter. Her youngest son, who was also in the house, escaped. Since the victims of accidental death become evil spirits *(soghā)* according to Limbu belief (Jones 1974b), special ceremonies had to be conducted to try and 'kill' the spirits to prevent them from harming their remaining kin.

The month following the deaths was a very difficult period for the family. The mother of the dead girl, the old woman's eldest daughter, spent much of her time wandering into the bazaar, drinking heavily. Sahila, who was normally unreliable, was incapable of working. The younger son, who had escaped from the fallen house, spent several weeks recuperating, as he had been slightly injured and badly shocked. Thus Sahili was placed in the position of holding the household together.

Following the accidental deaths, the oldest daughter took her dead mother's silver bracelets and gold nose pin and sold them for sixty rupees. According to several Limbu women in the area, she then used the money 'drinking and buying beer for her boy-friends'. Previous to the accident, she had maintained a reputation of promiscuous behaviour, whether or not she lived up to it.

Sahili's possession by the dead mother-in-law's spirit came to our attention one month after the landslide. She became possessed during the day and ran screaming through the bazaar and into several houses. Her husband and sister-in-law ran after her and took her back to their home, beating her with a mass of nettles. According to the Limbu women who were with me when this incident occurred, she had 'shaken' each evening for the previous five days.

By possessing her daughter-in-law, the old women's spirit expressed her anger, saying, 'Give me my bracelets! Give me my nose ring! My oldest daughter cooked rice and meat. Give it to me!' (Speaking of the uneaten Dasaĩ food).

As we left the hills soon after this incident, we were unable to see its conclusion. Informants claimed that a special ceremony would occur to recapture and placate the old woman's spirit. However, as a result of her possession and the words of the spirit, her husband and sister-in-law were forced to curtail their own irresponsible behaviour and relieve Sahili of the sole burden of caring for a much distraught household.

Conclusion

In line with Lewis' hypothesis, both Kanchi's and Sahili's possession can be understood as a means through which these two women were able to gain access to denied goods and rewards.

Sahili was able to express her dissatisfaction with the behaviour of her sister-in-law and her husband, and she was relieved of much additional work responsibility. No doubt her position, before the possession, had been aggravated by the fact that she had been assuming an additional work load.

Before we came to Limbuan, Kanchi's position in Limbu society was certainly disadvantaged. Our entrance into the scene served to emphasize this deprivation through her assumed servant role, and created additional stress and conflict for her. Her possession provided a situation in which she could improve her status, receive material rewards, and avoid unpleasant work responsibilities.

Furthermore, both instances had an additional aspect in common. Both individuals were women, and as such of inferior status in terms of Limbu society. They used their state of possession, regardless of its interpretation by their friends, relatives and neighbours, as an 'oblique strategy of attack' against those who held positions of authority over them. In Kanchi's case it was the anthropologists; in Sahili's case it was her husband and sister-in-law, and although the former case was influenced by the entrance of the fieldworker into the community, it had much in common with the latter, which appears to be a culturally prescribed response to social pressure.

Such cases of spirit possession are not unusual in Nepal, although detailed reports are lacking, especially reports that describe the status and role of the individual possessed. There are indications, however, that women especially are subject to such attacks more frequently than men. This topic deserves more serious attention in future studies of spirit possession in Nepal.

Shirley Kurz Jones

1. *Kānchi* is the Nepāli kinship term for youngest sister. It is used as a pseudonym in this paper to protect the woman's real identity.

2. See Sagant's article in this volume for a description of the initiation of the *yuma*.

3. *Tito pāti* means literally 'bitter plant'; according to Turner (1931:283), *Artemisia vulgaris*.

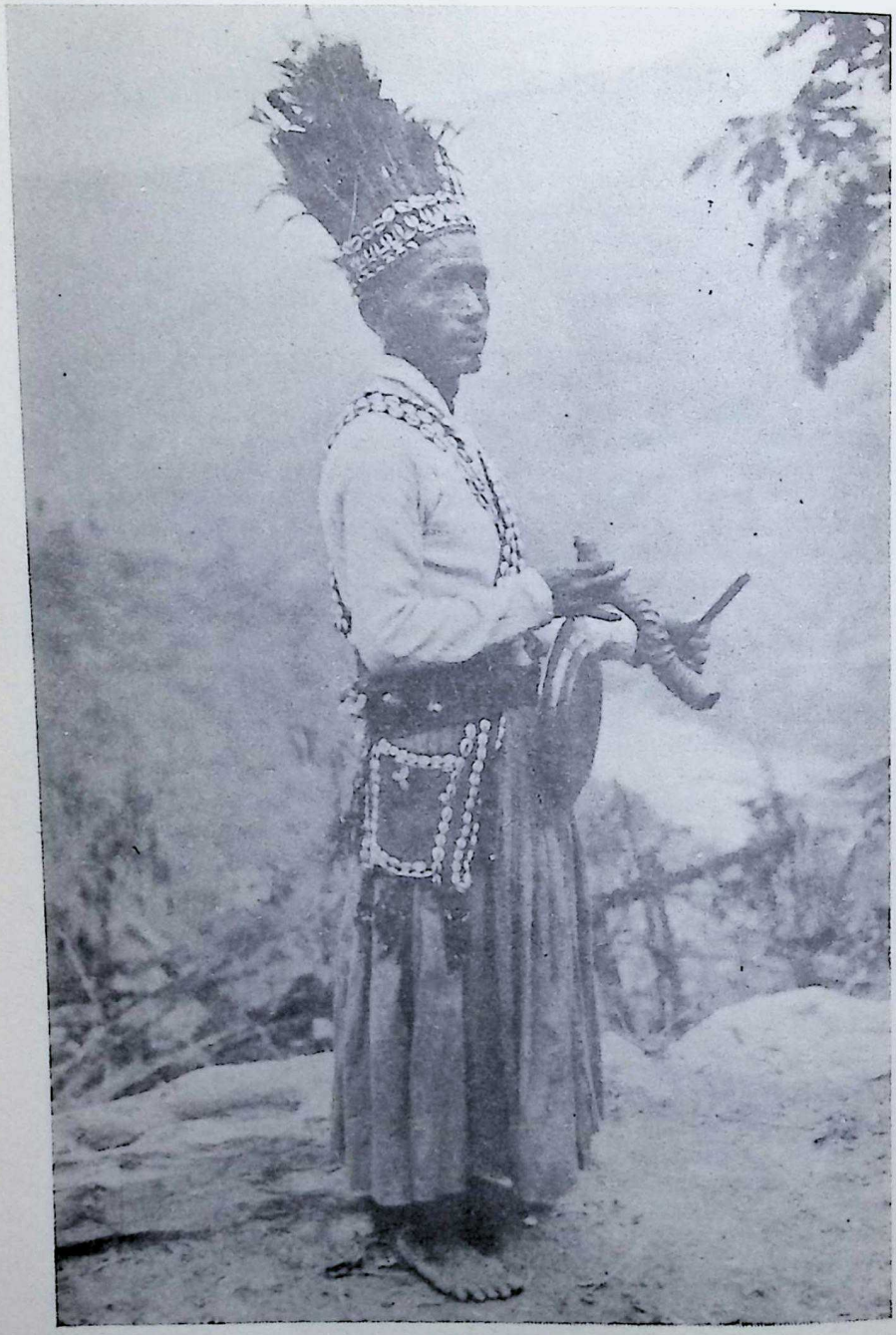
IV

LIMBU SPIRIT POSSESSION AND SHAMANISM

Introduction

Limbu shamanism[1] rests on a firm belief that people's lives are intimately linked to a world of supernatural beings. That world consists of numerous gods, goddesses, ghosts of the dead, and spirits associated with animals, plants, the forest, the home and other animate and inanimate objects of nature. Not every Limbu believes the same way or in the same things, nor as in most cultures, does every Limbu believe in supernatural forces with the same intensity. I encountered many Limbus who were confirmed agnostics, while others could be classified as 'true believers'. In general, most Limbus accepted the idea that disease, misfortune, crop-failure, death and other unexplainable events had supernatural causes. In order to understand these causes and to rectify unfortunate circumstances, they called on a series of religious practitioners which we in anthropology call shamans.

A shaman can be defined as a part-time religious practitioner who, through a controlled state of 'ecstasy', 'trance' or 'possession', is able to gain intimate knowledge of supernatural beings, their whereabouts, their mannerisms, their desires, dislikes, needs and requirements. He is a specialist in the human 'soul' and therefore fulfils the function of a doctor, a psychiatrist and priest in societies that do not differentiate between such religious or medical specialists. Shamans are generally distinguished from priests by the following attributes: 1) shamans are part-time professionals and seldom make their living solely through their religious occupation, as does a priest; 2) shamans do not inherit their status or succeed to it, but acquire it by divine intervention, which generally occurs in adolescence as a result of the trance or a state of possession. The priest, on the other hand, lacks the psychodrama of the shaman and generally acquires his position through inheritance, study or other channels of succession; 3) shamans are primarily curers and healers, while priests seldom diagnose disease and misfortune but instead limit their activities to prayer, worship and religious offerings to supernatural beings; 4) shamans generally shy away from set rituals having to do with the life-cycle, planting, harvesting or temple worship, while these are the stock



A Limbu shaman *(yeba)* in full dress costume

in trade of a priest; and finally, 5) shamans are controlled ecstatics who assume a trance or become possessed, and in that state they serve as mediums through which supernatural beings make known their wishes and display, often dramatically, their power.

As with many concepts in anthropology, the definitions become blurred in empirical situations. Limbu religious practitioners most certainly can be identified as shamans, but they also take on roles that are more traditionally identified with priests, as will become evident in the pages to follow.

The Kinds of Limbu Shamans

Limbus of the Terhathum area recognize five different kinds of shamans whose names are *yeba*, *yema*, *samba*, *phedangma*, and *mangba*.[2] The differences are often difficult for a non-Limbu to understand, just as it would be difficult for a Limbu to understand the religious differences between a 'preacher', a 'priest', a 'reverend', a 'minister', etc., in our society. Sometimes the distinctions are minute and unimportant, even to the initiated. All perform at weddings, funerals, wakes, harvest rites and periodic rituals for the welfare of households. Which one will be called upon is a matter of individual choice and availability. In short, all serve as 'priests' in that they are capable of performing set Limbu rituals.

The differences are more pronounced when it comes to the diagnosis and cure of disease and the prevention of misfortunes and other calamities that have supernatural causes. For example, the *yeba* and *yema* are specialists in diseases which are thought to have their origin in the spirit, Nahen - the spirit of envy and jealousy. Many Limbu feel they are more effective in controlling the evil actions of witches, such as the witches' desire to suck blood, which the *yeba* drinks during the Nahen ceremony. Frequently, they are referred to as witches *(boksa/boksi)* in Nepāli.[3] The only distinction made between a *yeba* and *yema* is in terms of sex - the *yeba* is a male while the *yema* is female. The *samba* is a specialist in the oral literature and mythology of the Limbu, collectively called the *mundhum*. Many believe his power is in the 'word', so to speak, and in his ability to recite the proper myth or *mantra* (N) that is needed in pacifying any angry spirit, god or goddess. A good *samba* should know the entire *mundhum* by heart, which as most Limbu will point out, may take a lifetime of study. Nevertheless, the *samba* should make this his goal as a shaman. The *phedangma* does not seem to have a specialized function, at least none which I could detect through frequent observation and questioning both of laymen and specialists. He is a 'jack-of-all-trades' shaman.[4] The *mangba* is a specialist in dealing with the spirits of people who have died by violence

(soghā) (L), women who died in childbirth *(sugut)* (L), and stillbirths *(susik)* (L). In fact, many informants insisted this was his sole function as a shaman and that he was incapable of performing any other ritual, diagnosis, or cure. I was able to witness the actions of a *mangba* only once, and this was at a ceremony for capturing ('killing') the spirits of two people who had died in a landslide.[5] He might well perform other rituals of which I am unaware. Several Limbus informed me that the *mangba* was originally a Rai shaman, and only recently came to Limbuan. I found no other reference to the *mangba* in any of the literature on the Limbu, whereas one or all the other Limbu shamans are mentioned by a number of observers. (Caplan 1970; Chemjong 1967; Sagant 1969; Hooker 1954; MacDonald 1962; Northey and Morris 1928; and Hodgson manuscripts, Vol. 74). This might indicate that he is a recent figure to Limbu religion, and quite possibly confined to the area where I did my fieldwork.

Limbus also speak of the distinct *mundhum* of each of the above shamans, indicating that they are associated with different oral traditions and have a separate history. At least two Limbu, one a shaman *(yeba)*, told me that the shamans are ranked just as the children of a family are ranked. They are referred to (using Nepāli terms) as *jeṭha* (oldest), *māĩlā* (second oldest), *sāĩlā* (third oldest), and *kānchā* (youngest). The *phedangma* is *jeṭha;* the *samba* is *māĩla;* the *yeba* is *sāĩlā;* and the *mangba* is *kānchā.* This order of ranking indicates that the *phedangma* is considered to be the oldest while the *mangba* is the youngest, a belief that finds support in other Limbu shamanic traditions.

A myth related to me by a knowledgable old man near Terhathum Bazaar, Nar Bir Tumbahangphe, details the origins of the first shamans. According to this myth, the first shaman was the *phedangma.* He had two names - Sing-dong-ding Pekwāing (L) and Segephungwa (L). The latter is the name of an unidentified species of plant with white flowers that blossoms on the high ridges of Limbuan. The first *phedangma* descended from the sky. He was sent by Tagera Ning-waphuma, the creator god, who is identified on earth as Yuma Sammang, the 'Grandmother Spirit'. He appeared in the rays of the sun and descended to the earth where he landed in a great body of water, a lake identified as the God, Warokmā, or the spirit of the waterplaces, lakes, streams, and waterfalls. He landed in a red part of the lake and swam ashore where he wandered the earth, learning the *mundhum,* which details the creation of the universe, the origins of men and animals, and the first customs and laws. After learning the *mundhum,* he became a *samba,* the shaman who is today identified as a mythological specialist. In the course of his learning; he was also given the powers to diagnose disease and cure the sick, through divination, sacrifice, and rituals to the gods and spirits of nature.

In contrast, the first *yeba* appeared in the green void of

darkness.[6] His mane was Pokthimba, which is also the name of an unidentified species of bird. The first *yeba* was taught the *mundhum* of the Nahen, the spirit of envy and jealousy, and given the powers to cure men who suffer from her attacks. His origin and power are unequivocably identified with the evil in nature. He is considered by many Limbu to be the most powerful of shamans. His tutelary deity is Yejuli, the spirit of witchcraft, and as noted earlier, both the *yeba* and *yema* are sometimes referred to as witches. Because of his powers of evil, many Limbu are of the opinion that he should not perform *pūjā* (N) to the other gods and goddesses of the Limbu pantheon. When I pointed out to informants that the *yeba* frequently officiated at funerals, harvest rituals, and sacrifices to Yuma Sammang, they insisted that he should not perform these ceremonies in his capacity as a *yeba*. When he performs such rituals, he should not call upon his tutelary deity, because to do so would bring harm to those who witnessed the performance.

As stated earlier, the *mangba* is believed originally to have been a Rai shaman, and I was unable to collect a myth that detailed his origin. He is, however, identified closely with the forces that aid the *yeba* and *yema* - the forces of darkness and evil. He is also sometimes referred to as a witch because of his powers over the spirits of those who die by violence.

The mythological origins of the first shamans agree with the folk conception of their ranking as *jeṭhā, māĩla,* etc. The *phedangma* is considered to be first in the order of creation followed by the *samba*, who finally learns the details of the *mundhum*, from which he receives his power. The *yeba* and *yema* appear much later, presumably after the creation of the forces of envy and jealousy, which in Limbuan are thought to be the source of evil itself. To the Limbu, evil is synonymous with these forces, which characterise not only the spirits of darkness such as Nahen, witches, and the forest spirits, Tamphungma, but the bad side of all supernatural beings. Any god or goddess is thought to represent danger to the living if not pacified with sacrifice and frequent offerings, which indicates that the ultimate source of evil is greed. The ranking and mythological origins of the Limbu shamans symbolize the contrasting forces of good and evil in the universe, and pinpoint these same forces at work in the behaviour patterns of men. When Tagera Ningwaphuma created the universe, especially mankind, he unleashed both good and evil, but in the creation of shamans he gave man the powers with which to harness these forces and maintain a balance between them. The activities of shamans symbolize both the fallibilities and failures of men, as well as their desire to overcome these shortcomings and reach omnipotence, with a life free from disease, misfortune, and death.

Shamanic Paraphernalia

The differences between Limbu shamans are also defined in their respective costumes and shamanic paraphernalia. Both the *yeba* and *yema* wear a costume consisting of a skirt *(jāmā)* (L), feather headdress *(wāsāng)* (L), cowrie shell bandoliers *(āplāk)* (L), and garlands of acorn seeds, *rudrākṣa* (N) beads, bells, and the like. They frequently wear a leather or canvas belt *(peti)* (N) on which are strung a series of bells. The *yeba* and *yema* do not use the traditional shamanic drum found throughout Nepal, but instead during a state of trance or possession they beat a brass plate *(thāl)*. (N).

In contrast, the garb of the *phedangma* and *samba* is much less dramatic. Noticeably absent are the feather headdress and cowrie shell bandoliers. Only on rare occasions, depending, I am told, on the teachings of one's *guru*, did I see a *phedangma* or *samba* wear the shaman's skirt *(jāmā)*. The key instrument in the ritual activities of the *phedangma* and *samba* is the two-headed drum, the *ḍhyāṅro*, (N) and both wear garlands of *rudrākṣa* beads and bells in curing ceremonies. It is important to note that shamans of all types seldom use the drum or the brass plate in life-cycle rituals - birth, marriage, and death - or harvest rituals. Their activities during such rites parallel those of a priest, while their powers as shamans are used as a means for summoning spirits and tutelary deities, as well as maintaining power over these supernatural beings. These powers are undesirable when making offerings to gods and goddesses who are neither angry nor displeased. The *mangba* uses both the drum and the brass plate, but does not wear the feather headdress, skirt or cowrie shell bandolier.

The costume and instruments of the Limbu shamans indicate a diffusion of Siberian shamanic practices and resemble those of other groups in Nepal. This is especially evident in the garb of the *yeba*. During the course of my fieldwork, I attempted to purchase a full costume of the *yeba* and *yema*. One Limbu informant took me to a Tamang shaman *(bon-po)* who owned such a costume. He was an old man of about seventy and no longer practising his art. The headdress was almost identical to the one I eventually purchased from a *yeba* in Chathar province of Limbuan, with the exception that the Tamang headdress (called by the same name, *wāsāng*) consisted of peacock feathers, while the *yeba*'s headdress included the feathers of a number of other species of birds. Both headdressed displayed a headband decorated with cowrie shells in which the feathers were sewn. During my search, I also encountered a female shaman *(yema)* who owned a similar headdress but refused to part with it. The type of headdress under discussion closely resembles those of the *jhākri* found elsewhere in Nepal.[7]

The *yeba* who finally parted with his headdress told me that the kinds of feathers used were not of extreme importance, although the wild species of birds were preferred to domestic fowls. The feathered

headdress of the *yeba* is symbolic of celestial flight, characteristic of classic Inner Asian shamanism, which explains the preference for feathers of wild birds, especially wild birds of the high Himalaya.

Other instruments of the Limbu shamans parallel the Inner Asian tradition. The two-headed drum *(ḍhyāṅro)*, oval, or occasionally diamond or triangular shaped, resembles many of the drums used by Siberian shamans. Although the hides of goats and water buffalo are occasionally used in making drumheads, the most preferred skins are of deer and elk. As noted by Eliade (1964:173-74), the deer and horse symbolize the swiftness and speed of superhuman flight during the trance. Drum heads are occasionally painted with drawings of the sun and moon, which are symbolic of the shaman's celestial origin and flight during the trance. Similar motifs are frequently carved with images representing helping spirits or Limbu deities, including the Limbu high goddess Yuma Sammang, the earthly counterpart of Tagera Ningwaphuma, the creator. I have seen a number of species of animals carved on drum handles - birds, elk, deer, and snakes are the most frequent - similar to the decorations of Tungus shamans (Eliade 1964:172). Most of these animals are symbolic of his journeys through the sky during a state of ecstasy. Also, frequent representations of the 'cosmic tree' are either painted on the drum head or carved in the handle. Such symbolism again draws attention to classic Inner Asian shamanism.

Drums are used by Limbu shamans to achieve a state of ecstasy and control helping spirits as well as to gain power over those that do harm to the living, such as Nahen or the spirits of those who died by violence. Although the *yeba* does not use the shaman's drum during a séance, preferring the brass plate, in the Nahen ceremony, he constructs an altar which holds a large double-headed Limbu dance drum *(chāubruṅg)* (L).[8] As the spirit approaches, it beats this drum to signify its arrival. During a ceremony to capture the spirits of two persons who died in a landslide, the *mangba* used the *ḍhyāṅro* as well as the brass plate to entice the spirits into a hole where he 'killed' them. On numerous occasions when I witnessed cures by both Limbu and non-Limbu shamans, the drum was the principal aid in controlling helping spirits and pacifying angry ones. Again the similarity to Inner Asian shamanic practices is evident.

The Shaman's Altar

The most conspicuous Inner Asian traits that appear in Limbu shamanism have to do with the construction and symbolism of the shaman's altar. The type of altar varies with the shaman and the occasion, but a number of elements remain constant. Invariably, in séances that have to do with the control of evil spirits - Nahen, *soghā, sugut, susik* - or witches, the shaman (whether it be the

yeba, phedangma, samba, or *mangba*) constructs an earthen mound in the centre of which are two criss-crossing bamboo poles, held together by a ladder with seven, or occasionally three, rungs made of strips of bamboo. During such séances, the shaman's soul *(sam samma)* (L) is believed to ascend this ladder and seek out spirits that are to be summoned to his aid. The *yeba* and *mangba* whom I questioned were emphatic on this point, but one *samba* was vague in response to my questions as to its purposes. He claimed at one point that only his 'words' travelled since any fool could see that he never left the ground.

I think my confusion arises from an inability to grasp the complexities of Limbu beliefs concerning the 'soul' *(sam samma)*. I was told by a number of Limbu that a person possesses seven (one person insisted that it was eight) 'souls' or 'vital essences'. The life of an individual is identified with his breath, which is the part of him that leaves his body at death. Limbu, however, believe that an individual has other 'souls'. Each of the five senses - smell, taste, touch, sight and hearing - are considered to be separate 'souls', all of which disappear with the decaying of the body after death. Another part of the individual (seventh soul) is that part of us we leave in different places - our impressions on the world, so to speak. For example, I was told that I had left a 'soul' in America, one in London, one in India, and would leave one in Nepal when I left. The one individual who insisted that we have eight souls claimed that we also have a part of us that experiences rebirth in different lives. To this soul is attached one's *karma* or 'fate'. Perhaps this element is a Sanskritic innovation. I was unable to determine how widespread this belief is. None of those present during this discussion would deny the man's claim, although most shrugged their shoulders and said, 'Who knows?' *(kunni?)* (N). When I questioned others on this point, they would usually claim that a person had seven souls. Many, however, would plead ignorance of the whole thing.

On reflection, I think that what is believed to 'travel' during the shaman's trance is the seventh 'soul', or the part of him that is left wherever he visits. This would explain the insistence on the part of some shamans that their soul 'travels' during trance, as well as the notion of the one who insisted that 'any fool could see he never left the ground'. Part of him travels, but his body, complete with the breath and the five senses, remains grounded.

There is little doubt that Limbu shamans believe that a part of them travels during trance. This is substantiated by Sagant (1969:116-117) who did research in northern Limbuan. According to him, at the death of an individual, the shaman accompanies the deceased's soul to land of the dead, and he is also capable of retrieving the wandering souls of individuals who become ill and lose their soul, or whose souls stray from the body during dreams (Sagant 1969:118). Sagant goes into detail as to just how the

shaman's soul travels, but he does not indicate a Limbu belief in seven souls.

The shaman's altar, mentioned above, serves as a kind of 'launching pad' for the shaman's travels during trance. The similarities to classic Inner Asian shamanism are again evident. Unlike many parts of Inner Asia, Limbu shamans do not physically ascend a ladder (except during initiation, see Sagant in this volume) nor do they climb trees during séances. They usually remain seated in front of the altar when summoning the spirits, but sporadically, during séances that I have witnessed, they dance around the altar, occasionally becoming so excited that they leap and spring about, shouting and arguing with the spirits. At one séance I witnessed, a *samba* leaped up to the altar and seized a dog's skull with his mouth and began to run around on hands and knees, growling at everyone. He crawled rapidly around the courtyard and in and out of the house, startling everyone present. Even the dogs in the area began to howl and bark at him adding to the general uproar. He finally paused in front of the pregnant woman for whom the ceremony was arranged and who had previously had two stillbirths. With the dog's skull in his mouth, he began sniffing at her crotch, in search of the spirits of her former stillbirths *(susik)* (L). He had apparently assumed the shape of a dog in order to capture these dangerous spirits. During the same séance, he was assisted by a fellow shaman, a *phedangma*, who became so excited at one stage of his ecstasy that he almost fell off the back porch of the house and into a ravine below. He was caught, with one foot dangling, by a spectator, and never missed a beat.

The altar varies from one shaman to the next. While visiting Chathar province in search of a shaman's garb, I encountered a *yeba* who constructed an elaborate altar he used in the diagnosis and cure of diseases associated with Nahen and witchcraft. He did this at my request, since I was unable to witness such a séance during my fieldwork, although the important details had been explained to me by a number of Limbu informants. The essential features of the altar were similar to others that I had seen constructed in ceremonies dealing with the spirits of people who died by violence or women who were in danger of the spirits of pregnancy. Two criss-crossed bamboo poles were erected on a small earthen platform and held together by a bamboo ladder with seven steps. The altar was about twelve to fifteen feet in height and called *yebung sing* (L). According to the *yeba*, the steps symbolized the 'evils of existence' with which he was capable of communication during trance. He used the Nepāli terms *pustā* (generation) or *tala* (levels) in describing them to me. During the trance, his 'soul' would journey up this ladder symbolizing his journey through seven celestial realms inhabited by supernatural beings. At the base of the altar, he constructed a small 'fence' of bamboo, about three to five inches high and about two feet long, extending at a right angle to the altar. This fence consisted of

seven x's made of bamboo strips. The fence was called *keme-yong-song* (L) and symbolized the land of the dead. The *yeba*'s soul was believed to travel to this realm during trance, if need be, to release the spirits of those who lost their 'soul' during illness, sleep, or attacks by spirits of the dead. According to the *yeba*, the spirit Nahen (envy, jealousy) or a witch might be the cause of such 'loss of soul', since they would entice the living person's soul to seek reunion with loved ones who had died. His duty as a Yeba often required him to release *(chutāunu)* (N) such wandering souls and to protect *(bachāunu)* (N) them from Nahen and witches, *(boksa/boksi)*.

The *yeba*'s altar was decorated elaborately with other fetishes and shamanic equipment. At the base, in the centre of the altar, he placed a vase of flowers and a dish of rice as offerings to the spirits. Adjacent to these offerings a sword was stuck into the mound, presumably used in battles with witches and other supernatural forces. In back of the altar, about two feet from the ground, he attached a large doubleheaded drum *(chāubrung)* (L), which the spirits would use in signaling their presence. The *yeba* claimed he could identify them by name as a result of the drum beat. Just above the drum, also attached to the back of the altar, was a large carrying basket *(thunse)* (N) used by Nepali women for transporting grain. The *yeba*'s tutelary spirit *(yejule)* (L) carries the *yeba*'s soul in this basket on his perilous journeys to the sky or to the underworld. At the same height but in front of the altar, he attached two bottles, which he claimed would be filled with liquor and beer as an offering to the spirits that he would summon. Adjacent to these bottles, he attached a bundle of bird feathers which he called *(nishān)* (N) or 'banner'. These symbolized the supernatural beings which he would encounter during the séance.

As a final touch, the *yeba* displayed his personal fetishes, some of which he associated with powers revealed to him in former trances. Among these were a conch shell and a horn of an antelope, which he used to control evil spirits, especially the forest spirit, Tamphungma. He also displayed a snake bone neckalce *(mālā)* (N), used against witches, and another made of hornets' heads.

On finishing the altar, the *yeba* donned his costume consisting of the feathered headdress *(wāsāng)*, the cowrie shell bandolier *(āplāk)*, the skirt *(jāmā)*, and the waist band of bells, each of which symbolized the power of a different deity.

During the Nahen ceremony, which lasts sometimes two to three days, the *yeba* enters into trance a number of times. He chants the *mundhum* of the Nahen, he dances around the altar, and performs other acts that are designed to entertain his audience, as well as to create an aura of supernatural power. The most spectacular of his actions during this performance is the drinking of blood, which according to a number of informants, he magically produces

out of the air. This act is what identifies him as a witch, as well as miracle performer, and inspires confidence, admiration, and even fear in his audience. It is unlikely that this performance has established his reputation as one of the most powerful of Limbu shamans. As the Limbu say, 'When jealousy appears, one needs a *yeba*'.

Other shamans' altars are not nearly as elaborate. One that I saw constructed by a *samba* for the purpose of ensuring a childbirth free from the dangers of *susik*, was much smaller. It was only about three feet high, and the ladder consisted of three rather than seven rungs. The fence at the base was about two inches high and extended in a semi-circle around the base of the mound. It was open at the front, where the *samba* sat while chanting the *mundhum*. At the base, he had planted a club, as well as a sword, and an offering of flowers and rice were in the centre, as in the *yeba*'s altar. The altar did not display a drum or a basket, as did the *yeba*'s. At the beginning of this particular ceremony, the *samba* opened a bag of fetishes which he placed around the altar. Among these was a long bone about five inches in length, called *susik*, which the *samba* claimed was human. Other items included a tiger's tooth, the upper jaw of a rodent, a dog's head on a stick, wrapped in cloth, and a large bundle of brown rags which he later soaked in oil and lighted. This was used to 'kill' the *susik* after having enticed them into a hole nearby. He also decorated the altar with a series of birds' feathers, as did the *yeba*.

A third altar that I saw constructed resembled the *yeba*'s altar. This was erected by a *mangba* for the purpose of killing the spirits of two individuals who had died in a landslide. It was approximately the same height as the *yeba*'s and differed in that no drum or basket was attached to the altar.

The altars described above show definite influences of Inner Asian shamanism. The altar itself is symbolic of the 'cosmic tree' that is so much a part of this classic shamanic tradition. The use of birds' feathers and the ladder are symbolic of classic shamanic flight, and the ability of the shaman's soul to travel during a state of controlled trance are evident in the symbols of the land of the dead at the base of the altar and the ladder.

Limbu shamans do not always construct such altars. Their construction is situation specific - primarily having to do with séances for the protection of the living against evil spirits, especially Nahen, *susik*, *soghā*, *sugut*, all of whom are associated in one fashion or another with greed.

In the same way, the Limbu shaman's trance or state of ecstasy is situation specific. It is only in situations that involve illness or imminent misfortune to the living that the Limbu shaman

enters into trance. He does not always construct an elaborate altar but may simply simulate a small altar within the home. He seldom goes into a trance in making offerings to household gods or during life-cycle ceremonies. His trance, as Eliade describes it, is related to the dangers that befall the human soul.

The trance, feigned or genuine, is the Limbu shamsn's primary means of contact with supernatural beings. His shamanic paraphernalia are the tools that aid him in achieving this state as well as in manipulating the forces he encounters while in trance. The costume, the drum, the brass plate, the altar, and a kit of 'medicines' or fetishes are the items that give him power and protect him from the dangers that are ever present during his ecstatic state.

Limbu shamans do not, to my knowledge, make use of drugs or aids other than those described in achieving a state of ecstasy, nor do they use herbs or other drugs in curing the sick. Frequently, they make fetishes by using special plants from the jungle, which they give to the sick to wear, but I have not seen one Limbu shaman prescribe an 'oral' medicine of any kind. Illness, misfortune, accidents, crop failure, the death of a kinsman, or the death of a domestic animal, are all believed to have supernatural origins. If unable to learn the specific spirit or deity responsible, the Limbu will say it is the 'will of God' (Tagera Ningwaphuma). 'Who knows the will of God? Not even a shaman knows it!'

The Supernatural World

Limbu of the Terhathum area worship a number of deities taken from the Hindu pantheon, such as Mahādeo (Śiva), Durgā (Kāli), and Viṣhṇu Bhagāuti. They also share a belief with Hindu immigrants in a variety of local deities such as Singha Bahini, a lion goddess that is believed to have clawed her way out of the earth near the Terhathum Bazaar. Many of the deities of the Limbu pantheon are identified with those of the popular oral literature of Hinduism. Tagera Ningwaphuma, the Limbu creator, who is defined as the 'mind of knowledge' (Chemjong 1967:22) is also referred to as Bhagavān when speaking in Nepāli. I have also heard him identified on one occasion as Vishṇu Bhagāuti, because of his powers of creation.

The most important deity is Tagera Hingwaphuma, the creator, who is worshipped in his earthly form as the goddess, Yuma Sammang. According to the *mundhum* of creation, Tagera Ningwaphuma just 'existed'. He is sometimes referred to as the 'self-existing one' (Chemjong 1967:27). He created the light, the water, the air and the earth with his divine knowledge and power. He also created all the other deities and spirits, including the first shamans. Thereafter, Tagera Ningwaphuma fades into the background. Limbus call to him only in times of exasperation, or at times when things

happen which have no conceivable explanation. For example, during an extremely violent thunderstorm with heavy wind and rain, our cook would often cry out in anguish, *'Bhagavān, kasto ho!'* (N) or, 'God, what is happening?'. However, he is never worshipped or given offerings under this name. Such rituals are reserved for Yuma Sammang.

Yuma Sammang seems to be an importation from Tibet, prior to the introduction of Buddhism to that country. According to Chemjong (1967:Part II 21-27), a Tibetan prince by the name of Uba Hang invaded Limbuan in the 9th century, bringing the cult of Yuma Sammang with him. Chemjong goes on to state that Uba Hang was under the possession of this goddess who, through him, ordered her subjects to make periodic offerings of fruits and flowers, but not animal sacrifice. Whatever it was in those days, today Yuma Sammang demands a blood sacrifice, usually a pig.

Other traditions point towards Tibet as the source of Yuma Sammang worship. In one legend, Limbuan was believed to have been peopled by ten brothers, five of whom came from Tibet and five from India. Limbu clans are divided into two groups, each tracing its origin to Tibet or India. Whatever the authenticity of the Chemjong account, it is highly likely that much of Limbu belief and ritual came from Tibet, either through conquest or immigration of exiled poeples. I have already pointed out some of the unmistakable similarities between Limbu and Inner Asian shamanism.

Yuma Sammang has a male counterpart, Theba Sammang, or the 'Grandfather Spirit'. According to Chemjong (1967:97), Theba Sammang was the divine ancestor of a Limbu king, whose ancestors immigrated to Limbuan from China. They were worshippers of Yuma Sammang. Legend has it that the Limbu had totally forgotten their origins, content in the worship of Yuma Sammang, until one day an old man appeared to them and pronounced that he was their ancestor and a great hero in his time. He appeared while they were hunting, becoming entangled in their traps and snares. On learning that he was Theba Sammang, they became overjoyed and began to worship him as he instructed. His worship demands an altar with a sword, bow and arrows, a shield and a red flag. Two culture heroes of Limbuan became famous soldiers as a result of their devotion to Theba Sammang, and he is frequently regarded as the god of war. One Limbu shaman, after chanting the *mundhum* to Theba Sammang, told me that it was difficult to placate him because he was so fierce. He spoke more out of admiration than fear.

A host of minor deities are worshipped in addition to those mentioned above. Misik Sammang, the god of fire, Him Sammang, the household god, and Okwanama Sammang, the god of the underworld, are among the many. Okwanama is believed to be located in the centre of the world and is paid tribute each time a new house is built. The centre post of the Limbu house is thought to be

connected to the centre of the world through this rite, and each year a Limbu household should set aside a day of ritual to this god.

Nahen is the god of jealousy and envy or, as described by Chemjong, 'the god of ambition'. He is believed to be an evil spirit only when he is not placated with a sacrifice every three years. If a household fails to do so, they may encounter his wrath and become greedy. Greed will then bring misfortune to that household in the form of illness or death.

A very important deity is Tamphungma, the forest spirit, who is believed to be a source of evil. As pointed out by Sagant (1969), more illness and bad luck is attributed to this spirit than any other Limbu divinity. She is called the *ban deutā* in Nepāli. Tamphungma lives on the outskirts of homesteads, on the edge of forests, and along trails. She has power over numerous nature divinities, which she uses to harm people who fail to placate her demands with frequent offerings. She should be worshipped on all other ritual occasions or she will become angry and harm those who forget her. In addition, each household should set aside a special time once a year to worship her alone. This is usually done on the edge of the forest or in the fields, and although a shaman should perform the ritual and make the sacrifice of a chicken or other animal, the household head is also able to perform this ceremony, as happened on the occasion that I witnessed it. According to Sagant (1969:115), Tamphungma is held responsible for accidents and falls, but where I did fieldwork, such misfortunes, if resulting in death, were invariable attributed to *soghā*, the spirits of those who die by violence.

Soghā, *sugut* and *susik* have been mentioned before. There are numerous spirits of this sort inhabiting villages throughout Limbuan. Every person who died by violence, every woman who died in childbirth, and every stillbirth resulted in the increase of these spirits. They must be periodically placated, especially at critical times such as pregnancy or when taking an extended journey where such accidents have been known to occur. Although shamans refer to the séances that are designed to capture these spirits and render them harmless as 'rituals to kill the spirits' they do not in fact 'kill' them. As one shaman rhetorically replied when I asked him how he 'killed' them, 'Sahib, how can you kill a spirit?'. In other words, spirits are indestructible, and the use of the word in this context is only a metaphor.

Such spirits reside near the spots where they originally died in human form. They are forever attempting to cause other people to die in the same fashion. Limbu believe they can be controlled by shamans such as the *mangba*, who have special knowledge of their whereabouts and the powers to capture them.[9] One old man told me that they can only be held in captivity for three years,

and then the ceremony must be performed again. The responsibility for its performance lies with the closest living relatives, who are also in the greatest danger of being harmed by these spirits. Should a shaman not perform the ceremony properly, or should he fail to capture them, they will continue to plague the living. They can be recognized by their activities around the household, such as broken pots, strange noises at night or other unexplainable events. They have many of the characteristics of poltergeist in our society. They do not go to the land of the dead but remain to forever create uncomfortable and disastrous situations for the living.

Because of the nature of these spirits, funerals of those who have died at their hand are in exact reverse to a normal funeral. The bodies are not buried in Limbu cemeteries, but are buried in the jungle, away from the activities of everyday life. They are buried as rapidly as possible. The orifices of the body are closed off, and the body is buried face down, as opposed to a normal, face-up burial. After the burial, which is supervised by a *mangba*, the participants are cleansed and protected by charcoal smeared on the forehead. On returning from the burial area, a mock battle ensues among the participants, symbolizing the destructive forces that are at hand. The *mangba* then sets up his altar and, after having gone into a trance, locates and captures the spirits, which are placed in a hole and 'killed' by fire. No wake follows the burial, nor are the names of those who died mentioned. Only three years later will they be remembered, providing the shaman has done his work to perfection, when they will again be sought out and 'killed'.

In contrast, those who die normal deaths are given a proper burial and a feast *(bharkhi)* (L) shortly after the funeral. At this feast, which should take place three days after death for a woman and four days after death for a man, the deceased's soul is sent on its journey to the underworld. The soul must journey to its destination via a long, perilous road, at the end of which is a ladder that leads to the demon who guards the underworld (Yemorāj). The soul of the dead is occasionally accompanied by the shaman, especially if there are indications that it has not taken the journey, but remains to pester the living. Yemorāj is described as a horrible creature who 'eats' men and lives on death. He has a spot where he stores the heads of dead people he has eaten. One woman told me that he eats everything - houses, tools, animals and men. He is a fiery, stringy-haired, fierce creature, without eyes. One Limbu told me he was too horrible to imagine and could not possibly describe him. Others claimed they did not know what he looked like, since they had never seen him. Many Limbu do not believe he exists at all, and are content to think that the soul merely goes to a place of peace after death.

Because of Hindu influences, a few Limbu believe the soul is reborn according to the laws of *karma*, but the people that I knew best did not rule out the idea of a land of the dead, even if they accepted the notion of *karma*. As noted earlier, the general Limbu conception is that a person possesses seven or eight 'souls' The idea of rebirth is easily incorporated into the Limbu view of life after death. Generally, they accept the notion that a person's fate is written on the forehead at birth. I have frequently heard people sigh apathetically in times of extreme hardship that a person's fate was determined at birth and nothing could be done about it.

Limbu concepts of life after death and the world of supernatural beings is not a coherent set of logical principles. Viewpoints vary from one individual to the next, and it is common to find contradictory viewpoints held by the same individual. As a general rule, the Limbu believe in a life after death and a place where the souls of the dead reside. The land of the dead is not necessarily a horrible place, barring encounters with Yemorāj. It is not thought to be a place of eternal suffering for one's transgressions on earth. Suffering is a part of this life, and those who suffer after death are the ones who refuse to leave this world, such as the spirits of people who died by violence, especially suicide or in childbirth. In fact, there seems to be an idea that people who are killed by accident are somehow responsible for their own deaths in the same way that a victim of suicide is ultimately responsible for his own death. The role of the shaman in this scheme of things is to protect the living against supernatural forces through offerings to gods and goddesses and in his role as mediator between humans and spirits.

Witchcraft and Sorcery

Other sources of disease, misfortune and death are living human beings who possess innate supernatural powers, and, because of greed, use these powers against their fellow man. The witch *(boksa/boksi)* may be either male or female and may assume the shape of an animal, especially a cat, and generally attacks at night.

I am uncertain as to how a witch is identified, but two witches, both old and widowed, were believed to reside in Terhathum Bazaar. One was an old Brahman woman about seventy-five, who was the only full-time beggar in the area. The other was also an old widowed woman, but I never learned her identity. Limbu are extremely reluctant to discuss the identity of witches, for fear they will hear the conversation and become angry. They are not so afraid to discuss witches in general, or their habits and behaviour patterns, but they do not like to identify them with single individuals. I was told that witches were more plentiful else-

where in Limbuan than in the Bazaar area. This was attributed to the large number of shamans in the area, who had the powers to keep them at bay.

Our most detailed information on witches came to us as a result of an incident with a dog we owned. My wife and I had picked up a pup at the very beginning of our fieldwork. We had foolishly (by Limbu standards) given five rupees for the pup, because it was the best of a litter of half-starved dogs. We fed him well, and the pup was the subject of endless conversation. Most refused to believe it was a hill dog, and claimed we brought it from America because of its shiny coat and general good health. We would also pamper the pup beyond normal standards and get very upset when visitors kicked the dog, as Nepalis are inclined to do when dogs get too 'friendly'. Before long, a general dislike for the dog had set in among many people who felt the dog was too well-fed and pampered.

The dog eventually contracted distemper, and lost control of its hind legs. Reluctantly, we put it to death. We then learned that many believed the dog was witched by an old woman in the Bazaar, who was envious of the good care and the food it was fed. She was a daily visitor to our house, begging for food and money. One informant claimed that she caused the dog to become ill out of jealousy.

The same witch was also thought to be the cause of frequent back-aches of a woman of the tailor caste who lived nearby. The witched woman was the wife of a practising shaman, who attempted to cure her a number of times without success. She eventually called in a Tamang *jhãkri*, who had a reputation of great skill in dealing with witches. She was still not cured on our departure, although she claimed to be feeling much better.

Witches usually attack people on the trails at night when they are alone. Female witches envelop their victims in a large *sāri* (N) and smother them to death, or cause them to fall or get hit by landslides. Witches can also enter people's houses at night and cause them to become ill by injecting substances into their bodies, or smothering them in their sleep.

Only shamans have the power to control witches, especially the *yeba*, whose tutelary deity is a witch (Yejuli). Shamans cannot 'kill' witches but, through ritual and the help of the tutelary spirit, they can render the work of witches harmless. They are able to remove the substances that witches inject into people's bodies to cause illness. They are also capable of retrieving 'souls' that have been stolen by witches. This is believed to happen frequently while dreaming, when one's 'soul' wanders around.

Shamans also have the power to kill each other, and I was told that in the old days this happened frequently. Shamans are frequently very jealous of each other's powers, and when they are in the company of one another, especially if they are strangers, they become reluctant to discuss their trade for fear the other will learn one's secrets. If this should happen, a shaman could send an 'arrow' into the other shaman's body, at a most vulnerable spot, and kill him. He would presumably learn this 'spot' by discovering the limits of the shaman's power.

Divination and Curing

Limbu shamans divine in a number of ways. The techniques they use are related to the different situations of illness and misfortune. The most frequent technique used for minor aches and pains is rice divination. The patient or client presents the shaman with a coin, which he places in a brass plate. He then takes a handful of rice, covers the coin, and separates the rice into six small piles. I was told that four of these represented the directions and two of them Limbu deities. In one case, the shaman told me that two of the piles symbolized Yuma and Theba Sammang. The shaman the counts the grains of rice in each pile - even numbers signifying one thing and odd numbers another. In this way, he is able to determine the severity of the illness, its cause, the direction from which it came, and the course of action to be taken.

A second form of divination, used in cases of extreme illness, requires the shaman to take articles of clothing from the patient and place them at an altar erected for Yuma Sammang or other Limbu deities. The shaman then chants the *mundhum* and goes into a trance. He learns the nature of the illness by divination in the presence of the clothes and seeks help from his tutelary spirit. The details of this form of divination were never explained to me, but it is used in most major séances where the shaman constructs an altar and goes into a trance.

Occasionally shamans will take the pulse of a patient and determine the illness. At a wedding I attended, one of the guests fainted. Two shamans were present. One held the patient and took his pulse beat. After a few moments, he declared that the man had been attacked by Tamphungma, the jungle spirit. He chanted a few *mantra* to this spirit, and gradually the patient revived. He told me this would not free the man from the grasp of Tamphungma, but was only a temporary measure. On returning home, the man would have to call in a shaman who would perform a *pūjā* to Tamphungma on his behalf.

As stated earlier, all illness and misfortune are thought to have supernatural causes. In extreme cases, the divination and

cure require elaborate preparations on the part of the shaman and are expensive for the patient. The patient and his family must feed the shaman while he is in attendance. They should also supply him with liberal quantities of beer, liquor and tobacco. The payment of the shaman follows the cure. I was told that unsuccessful cures require no payment, but that a successful cure would sometimes require as much as twenty or thirty rupees. The amount would be determined according to the time the shaman spent with the patient. Sometimes payment is in cash, but more frequently, it consists of goods such as clothing or grain.

The Acquisition of Shamanic Power

One becomes a shaman as a result of possession by a deity. The most frequent possession seems to involve Yuma Sammang. At first, possession is involuntary, and the victim seeks a cure by consulting a shaman, who will attempt to pacify the deity with offerings. Should he be unsuccessful, the victim may take this as a sign that he is to learn the art of shamanism in order to eventually control his possession.

Many times, the state of involuntary possession continues for years, or in rare cases, throughout one's life, without the victim becoming a shaman. Simple possession by a deity is not the only sign that one is to become a shaman. One must acquire a teacher, or rather, more accurately, the teacher must discover the patient and learn the will of the deity. Limbu insist this knowledge comes to the teacher as a result of the deity's own wishes, not the patient's or the teacher's. The teacher might learn this in a dream, or in a state of trance, or through some other divine omen. He then pays the victim a visit, informing him of the wishes of the deity. The teacher, who is himself a practising shaman, then begins to teach the patient the *mundhum* and the techniques of his art, which include divination, the construction of an altar, and how to make and use the shamanic paraphernalia - the costume, the drum and the various fetishes.

Invariably, the patient rejects the call to become a shaman. Few desire to become shamans but, at least consciously, would rather be cured of their possession than to take on a trade which requires much time and effort and few rewards. I never met a wealthy Limbu shaman. The practising shaman is frequently taxed both physically and mentally. During major festivals, such as Dasaĩ, he is in great demand and often goes days without sleep. Frequently, his own family is neglected, as well as his fields. The remuneration for his services seldom equals the losses that he suffers as a result of neglecting his own agricultural work. Furthermore, most of the shamans I met had large families. One shaman had eight children. The value of a large family is great, once the children have reached the age where they are able to help

in the fields, but while they are young, they only represent more mouths to feed.

Spirit possession indicating the call to shamanic apprenticeship usually occurs at an early age. One shaman, a *yeba*, was first possessed at age eight by the spirit Samdongmā Yejuli, a household spirit of his mother's brother. His family called a shaman on a number of occasions, with the intention of curing the boy, without success. Finally, a *yeba* from Panchthar district learned of his plight and visited the boy, telling him that he was to become a *yeba*. He taught him the *mundhum* of Nahen and how to control the Yejuli spirit. The *yeba* told me that at first he rejected the idea, but after much coaxing from his *guru*, he decided that he would become an apprentice. His apprenticeship was short, not lasting more than two years. He then began to call the spirit at will and have success in curing people who became ill as a result of Nahen or by witches. Occasionally, however, even today, he has difficulty in controlling Yejuli, and sometimes the deity 'comes on him' without being summoned. While visiting my home, he became possessed, and fell into a trance for a period of two or three hours. This shaman also served in the British Gurkhas from 1943 to 1951. During that period, he seldom practised as a shaman, but on his discharge he again took up the art.

Another shaman, a *samba*, was first possessed at sixteen by a household spirit of his mother's brother's lineage. His *guru* came shortly after and began to teach him the *mundhum*. He taught him how to do *pūjā* to the various deities of the Limbu pantheon and how to control his possession. He also taught him divination, and various ways of curing illnesses through the use of 'medicines' and chants. The *samba* claimed that he did not reject his fate, but welcomed it although he was somewhat frightened at first. This particular shaman was extremely proud of his powers, and frequently boasted of his cures to me. He also amused himself at my expense on a number of occasions, especially when I would question him about his craft. Towards the end of my fieldwork, we became close friends, however, and he would tease me less and less. I pleaded with him a number of times, early in my fieldwork, to teach me the arts of shamanism. He laughed a good deal at this, because according to him, I could never become a shaman unless the 'deity' came to me. He also joked about an old man nearby, named Nar Bir Tumbahangphe, who knew a great deal about shamans and their work, insinuating that the old man wanted to become a shaman but had never received the call. Much of my information on shamanism came from this old man, and the *samba* would often challenge his knowledge, claiming that he could not possibly know what he was talking about, since the deity had never come to him.

The call does not always come at an early age. Our cook, a woman of thirty years with two children, became possessed by Yuma Sammang at the time of our fieldwork. Her case is somewhat complex, and is described in more detail in this volume by Shirley Kurz Jones. She was touched by Yuma Sammang on some five or six occasions while working for us. A number of shamans in the area began to encourage her to take up an apprenticeship, which she strongly resisted. She claimed that the practice of shamanism would require too much of her time and would be too much of a physical and mental strain. She left Limbuan during our fieldwork, shortly after her possession, and went to Assam to live with her husband, who had bought some land there. She had not taken up an apprenticeship at the time of her departure. Whether or not she finally gave in to the demands of Yuma Sammang is unknown.

Yuma Sammang is frequently the goddess that possesses an individual and forces him or her to become a shaman, but it may also be a spirit of one's mother's brother's patrilineage, or the household deity of one's mother's brother, which are believed to be female deities as well. It may also be the spirit of one's maternal grandfather or grandmother. There is a widespread idea that the tutelary spirits of Limbu shamans are 'inherited' in the matriline and are feminine.

Being called by a spirit, through possession, does not always mean that the individual will become a shaman. One man who lived near our home would occasionally become possessed by the spirit of his maternal grandfather, but he did not become a shaman. I was told that a *guru* never came to him and he never learned the art. It was emphasized that, if the *guru* did not take up the individual as an apprentice, the individual could never learn to control his helping spirit.

The *guru* is essential to the practice of Limbu shamanism. He is the one who has learned to control his possession. He teaches this art to his apprentice and instills in him the confidence that is needed in dealing with supernatural powers. In this way, the *guru* also teaches his apprentice the causes of illness, the ways to diagnose, divination and the means of curing. Without a *guru*, a person possessed is merely a person that is ill.

Limbu shamanism is not just a matter of teaching and learning the procedures. Without the call through possession by a spirit, a person can never become a shaman, regardless of how much he learns about divination and curing rituals. Possession and teaching are both essential to the profession.

Limbu shamans become the kind of shaman that was the lot of their *guru*. If the *guru* was a *yeba*, the apprentice becomes a *yeba*. It is thought to be a contradiction in terms for a *samba*

to learn from a *phedangma* or vice-versa. Although the spirit is believed to be associated with the matriline in many cases, it was emphasized to me that the *guru* should never be a kinsman, either by descent or marriage. It is preferable to have a *guru* who is a stranger to the apprentice and who practices in a different area of Limbuan. This most likely has to do with a conflict of interests; but it might also arise out of the fear of each other's power. If the *guru* and apprentice are unrelated and live in separate localities, they are less likely to become jealous of each other's power and less likely to 'kill' one another through sorcery.

The Limbu Shaman as Priest

Limbu shamans are called upon to officiate at a number of household rituals and life-cycle ceremonies, in addition to their activities as psychopomps. On these occasions, they do not call upon their tutelary deities, nor do they go into a trance.

They are asked by individual Limbu to make offerings to household gods on several occasions. It is customary for the head of the household to perform a harvest ceremony once a year, as an offering to the deities responsible for a good crop. On these occasions the shaman makes offerings to the household gods, Yuma and Theba Sammang, and Tamphungma, otherwise they might be offended and bring harm to the individuals of the household. Today, such rituals are performed during the Dasai festival and may involve the sacrifice of a goat or water buffalo to the Hindu goddess Durgā, as well as to the Limbu deities.

Shamans also officiate at weddings. They chant the *mundhum* and sacrifice a hen and cock, and the future of the marriage is foretold through divination of the blood of the sacrifice. They also instruct the couple in their duties in marriage.

At funerals, shamans are called to 'purchase' the burial plot from a spirit that resides at the cemetery, and at wakes they call upon the spirits of the dead to accept the offerings of the living. Frequently, at wakes, two or three shamans will make the offerings to the deceased's spirit. They also ask the guests and kinsmen to observe the end of the pollution period that has been observed by the deceased's closest kinsmen. They instruct the spirit through chants to depart from this world and make his journey to the land of the dead. They do not go into trance on this occasion, but if there are indications that the spirit of the deceased has not left his earthly place of residence, they might be called upon to go into a trance and accompany him on his journey.

On numerous other minor occasions, shamans are called upon to perform household rituals. If a Limbu decides to kill a pig, a shaman is called in to do the killing and to offer a sacrifice to Yuma Sammang. They also perform rituals for the welfare of the

head of the household, called *nahangma* and *mangenna*. (See Sagant in this volume). This should be done at least once a year, but, as is the case with so many other Limbu religious rites, it is frequently combined with other household rituals because of the expense involved.

The ceremony of Tongshing, performed every three years, is considerably more complicated. Frequently, two or more households, related patrilineally, pool their resources to pay the shamans to conduct this rite. Tongshing is a ritual in honour of the dead ancestors of the families involved. It lasts for two or three days, and to be performed properly, two or three shamans are needed. The shamans construct an altar in the courtyard, with the various offerings made to the important Limbu gods and goddesses. In addition, a small altar symbolizing the connection of the living to the dead is prepared by the shaman in charge. The link between the living and the dead ancestors is symbolized by a thread connecting two parts of the altar. After chanting the *mundhum* for two or three consecutive days, the shaman makes an offering of food, beer, liquor and other goods to the ancestors and cuts the thread, thereby severing all ties between the living and the dead.

Although sacrifices are made to the jungle divinities, especially Tampungma, on even the most minor of ritual occasions, they should be pacified with a special ceremony once a year. On this occasion a shaman is called in by the head of the household. He constructs a special altar in the jungle or in a field near the homestead, consisting of a small platform and offerings of rice, water, and beer. He seats himself in front of the altar and chants the *mundhum*. The ceremony is concluded with a sacrifice of a chicken to Tampungma (Sagant 1969).

On the numerous occasions such as those described above, the Limbu shaman serves his people as a priest, as well as diviner, healer, and spirit medium. During such rites, his abilities to assume a trance and to make contact with the supernatural are not nearly so important as are his abilities to recite the *mundhum* and to make offerings to the host of deities in the Limbu pantheon. Indeed, on most of these occasions, he does not go into trance or call upon his tutelary spirit helper. Instead, his knowledge of myth and ritual far outweigh his magical powers, and the psychopomp becomes a petitioner.

The Relationship of Limbu to non-Limbu Shamans

Today, Limbuan is a multi-ethnic community, and Limbu are in the minority in terms of population. In many areas, such as Ilam, Limbu number less than ten percent of the population (Caplan 1970).

The majority are high caste Hindus, especially Brahman and

Chetri, who have immigrated into the area in the past two hundred years since the conquests of Prithvi Narayan Shah. As with other aspects of Limbu culture, Limbu religion has also undergone considerable modification in response to this immigration.[10]

More frequently in the far eastern hills, the Nepāli term *dhāmi*, and less frequently, *bijuwā* or *dewāri*, are used in identifying non-Limbu shamans.[11] I have heard the term *jhākri* used only in referring to Tamang or Bhotia shamans, who, with certain exceptions, assume the full dress costume of the feather headdress, bells, and skirt. The *dhāmi* is content to make use of the drum and necklaces of bells and beads in his séances. The terms *dhāmi* and *jhākri* seem to be juxtaposed along these lines.

The differences between Limbu shamans parallel the differences between the *jhākri* and *dhāmi*.[12] It is as though these separate traditions, at least in terms of costume and drama, were incorporated into Limbu shamanic practices. It might well be that the *yeba* and *yema* are linked to the *jhākri* tradition, while the *phedangma* and *samba* have borrowed heavily from the more Hinduized *dhāmi*.

Before judgements are made, however, one should keep in mind that cultural borrowing is not a one-way process. This was brought home to me during a short trip to Taplejung Bazaar. On the way, I came upon two non-Limbu shamans, one a female and one a male, who claimed Yuma Sammang as their tutelary divinity. The male shaman was a Brahman and the female of the Sunuwar *jāt*. They invited me to the Brahman's home to witness a *'pūjā'* to Yuma Sammang. Both were dressed up in the shaman's skirt and wore several necklaces of bells and *rudrākṣa* beads. Each had a shaman's two-headed drum painted with symbols of the moon, sun, and the trident. They were leading a procession of about a dozen people, most of whom were the members of the Brahman's family. As we approached their house, the female shaman stopped for a short while to pay homage to the jungle divinity Tampungma by dancing and playing the drum. At the Brahman's house, both went into a trance in front of a special altar, devoted to Yuma Sammang. They told me that their *guru* was a Limbu, and for this reason they worshipped Limbu divinities. I thought the case was unusual, but my Limbu informants were not at all surprised. I was told that a shaman will assume the practices of his *guru* no matter what the caste or ethnic group.[13]

Regardless of ethnic affiliation, all shamans in Limbuan are aware of the practices of one another. I think there has been a mutual borrowing of ideas, dress, and other paraphernalia for many years.

Basic differences are still apparent. Non-Limbu shamans do not serve as priests. They do not officiate at harvest rituals or life-cycle ceremonies. Instead, they are almost exclusively concerned

with the diagnosis of disease and misfortune due to evil spirits, witches, and the like.

Limbu shamans, on the other hand, learn not only the arts and skills associated with magical curing and healing but the sacred Limbu oral traditions of the *mundhum*, sometimes called the Limbu 'Vedas'. In this way, the Limbu shaman maintains a practice that is peculiarly Limbu and quite distinct from their non-Limbu counterparts.

There are also differences between Limbu and non-Limbu shamans in terms of the trance. As noted earlier, many Limbu shamans believe that they are capable of magical flight during the trance. Non-Limbu shamans are frequently grounded. The *dhāmi* in particular obtains his power primarily through possession, generally by a familiar spirit or divinity that 'sits on their shoulder' and speaks to the audience during a séance. It would seem that the non-Limbu shamans reflect a theme I attempted to develop in an earlier paper (Jones 1968), in that they do not travel during the trance because the concepts of the soul and life after death are transformed in the Buddhist and Hindu traditions as a result of the belief in *karma* and the transmigration of souls. Limbu concepts of the soul and life after death have been only slightly modified in this regard, and the shaman maintains the classic Inner Asian psychodrama of magical flight to the land of the dead or to retrieve wandering souls.

Limbu shamanism is nevertheless much different from the 'classic' shamanism described by Eliade (1964). Limbu shamans are something more than ecstatics, psychopomps, or specialists of the human soul. They serve their people as priests on numerous occasions that do not require their skills as mediums or as diagnosticians of misfortune. In this way, the 'classic' shamanistic tradition as described by Eliade has been modified, altered, and adapted to Limbu needs and Limbu history. Much of this shamanic tradition may have been influenced by Hindu contacts, but I suspect that diffusionary explanations alone cannot help our understanding of the meanings attached to it. It is probable that shamanism, as defined by Eliade, never existed in reality but is merely as abstraction of the comparative analyst. A deeper understanding may lead us to explanations of variations in the shamanic complex rather than attempts to explain its similarities. This, I think, is where we, as anthropologists, have much to offer the comparative study of religion. Through our ethnographic documentation of these different contexts, we might do something other than parrot pre-conceived and often simplistic notions of what a shaman is and does.

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1. In a slightly different version this paper was presented at the Nepal Symposium at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, in the summer of 1973. The symposium was chaired by Professor C. von Fürer-Haimendorf. The original title was 'A Short Discussion of Limbu Shamanism' I would like to thank the participants of that symposium for their criticisms, comments, and stimulating discussions on this and other ethnographic topics in Nepal.

The fieldwork on which most of the material is based was conducted from November 1967 to January 1969, in Eastern Nepal, mostly around the area of Terhathum Bazaar.

I wish to thank the Research Foundation of the State University of Stony Brook for a Summer Grant in Aid which made the completion of this paper possible.

2. The terms *'yema'* and *'yeba'* are Limbu dialectual variants of the terms *'yama'* and *'yaba'* mentioned by Sagant in his article in this volume.

In addition to the types of shamans described in this paper, Terhathum Limbu also recognize the *yuma*, described in detail by Sagant in his article. During my fieldwork, I never encountered a practicing *yuma*. Our cook (see Shirley Kurz in this volume), who became possessed on a number of occasions, was often described as 'on her way to becoming a *yuma*', but the distinctions between a *yuma* and *yema/yeba* were never made clear to me. I did not encounter the other religious specialists mentioned by Sagant.

3. See Macdonald's article 'Sorcery in the Nepali Code of 1853' in this volume for codified rules governing the activities of witches and sorcerers.

4. Sagant's article in this volume substantiates much of the information I have on the *phedangma*. He emphasized that the *phedangma* is always a male, and my information agrees. The same applies to the *samba*. As far as I could determine, a female could only become a *yema*, or *yuma*. Sagant further claims that only the *phedangma* is capable of performing the Nahangma ritual for the welfare of the head of the household. I witnessed such a ceremony that was performed by a *samba*. Perhaps this situation differs in the area I did fieldwork, or, perhaps the distinction between the *samba* and *phedangma* is relatively unimportant. Sagant, I think, is more emphatic in claiming that the *bijwā (yeba, yema, mangba)* should not perform this ceremony. In this case, my data concur.

5. See my article (Jones 1974b) which describes the ceremony for capturing these spirits.

6. In Sagant's article in this volume, he contrasts the *yeba* and *phedangma* in terms of 'left' and 'right', 'back' and 'front', and 'lower' and 'upper'.

7. See especially Hitchcock (1967, 1974) and others in this volume.

8. Note the similarities to the description of the Sunuwar *puimbo*'s altar as described by Fournier in this volume.

9. Sagant (in this volume) indicates that the *yaba* of the north also has these powers. I was told by informants that the *yeba (yaba)* could perform these rituals but that the *mangba* would always be called first if available.

10. See my article (1974a) for an analysis of Hindu influences on Limbu religion and other social relations.

11. Macdonald (1962:f41) notes that in the Darjeeling area Limbu shamans were referred to as *bijuwā*, usually translated as 'sorcerer, witch'. Sagant (in this volume) glosses the Limbu terms *'yaba'* and *'yama'* with the Nepāli term *'bijuwā'*. In the Terhathum area the *yeba*, *yema*, and *mangba* were frequently called *'bijuwā'*, but this term was never applied to the *phedangma*. Most Limbu in Terhathum use the terms *bijuwā* and *jhākri* interchangeably in describing Tamang or Bhotia shamans.

12. Macdonald (in this volume see 'Sorcery and the Nepali Code of 1853') claims that the distinctions between *jhākri* and *dhāmi* are never made clear in the literature. The distinction I am making in this paper is one that my Limbu informants made, and I do not claim it is similar elsewhere in Nepal.

13. See Macdonald (1962) where he notes that the *jhākri* tradition overlaps caste distinctions, both in the apprenticeship and in practices of curing and healing. Others, writing in this volume and elsewhere (see for example Hitchcock 1967), have observed a similar practice.

V

BECOMING A LIMBU PRIEST - ETHNOGRAPHIC NOTES

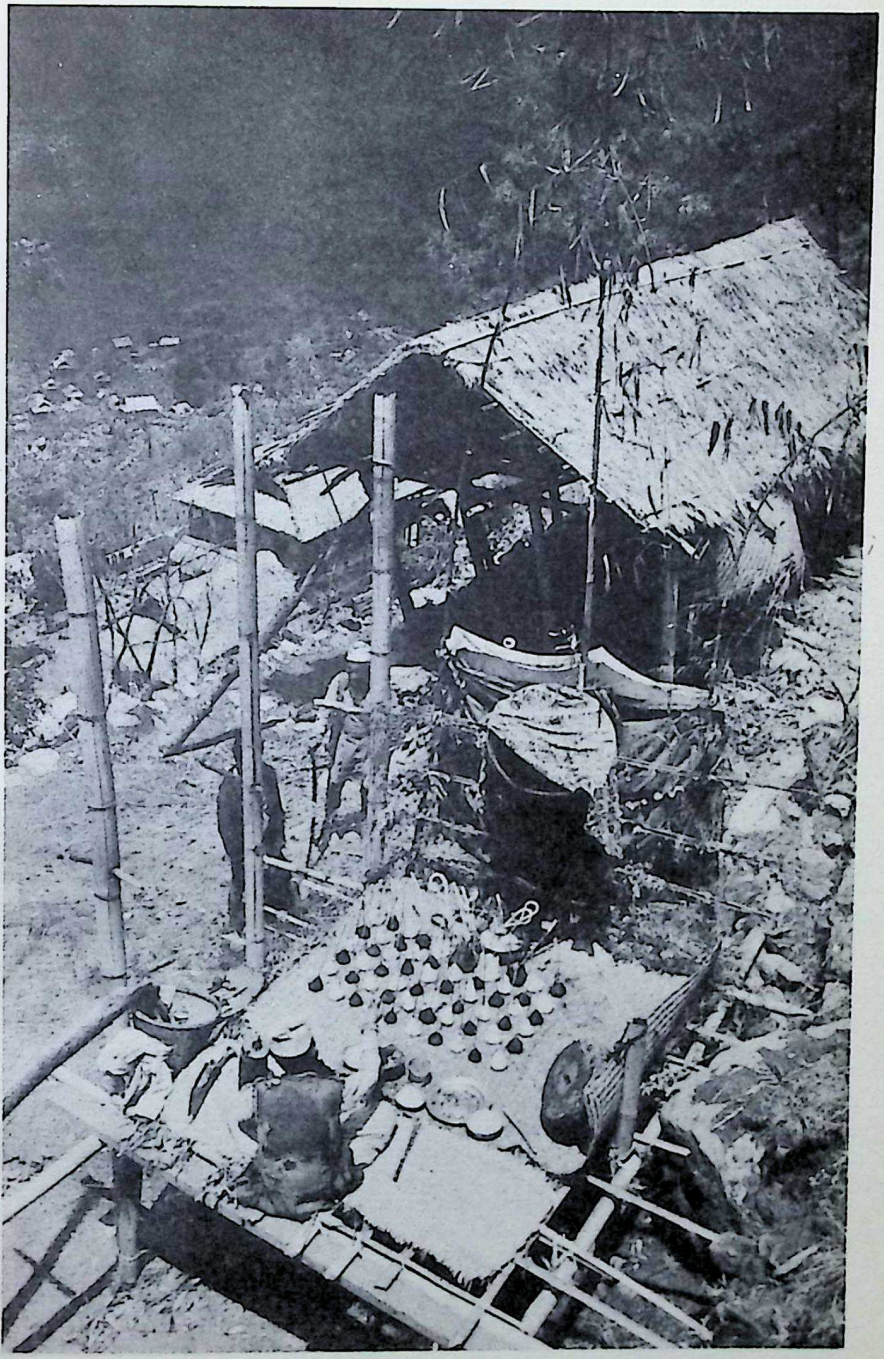
Introduction

The Limbu in Nepal number approximately 150,000 people. They have settled in the hills of the extreme eastern portion of the country, in the basin of the Tambar river, at altitudes between 1650 and 6600 feet. Before the Gurkha conquest, there seem to have been few foreigners among them, at least in the northern part of their territory. After the conquest in the 18th century, immigrants of all castes continued to flow in, transforming the agricultural landscape. New techniques of cultivation modified the traditional economic life.[1]

These socio-economic phenomena combine with cultural changes. A concerted effort has been undertaken by the central authority in Kathmandu to develop what might be called 'Nepalization', conceived on the basis of language (Nepāli), culture (Hindu), administrative centralization, technological progress, and new political priorities. 'Nepalization' has particularly affected the well-to-do minority. The small farmers, however, are more reticent. They remain attached to their traditional language. In many cases they do not understand the changes which are far from being favourable to them, and they fear the Nepali administration. They do not yet have a political awareness but take refuge in a desperate attempt to preserve their ethnic identity. In this respect, the Limbu masses remain closely attached to their own particular religion.

I have undertaken two trips to eastern Nepal. The first, from August 1966 to July 1967. The second from September 1969 to June 1971.[2] Both these trips took place primarily in the Mewa Khola Valley, north of the small city of Taplejung. This valley has approximately 15,000 inhabitants.

Proportionately, a quarter of the population consists of Indo-Nepali castes, (especially Chetri, Brahman, Samnyasi); one quarter is of speakers of Tibetan dialects (Sherpa and Bhotia); one half is Limbu. My investigation was concerned primarily with social, political and economic factors. I only touched upon some particular aspects of Limbu religion. I know that my material is limited and raises more questions than it answers, but I am presenting it just as I gathered it, in hopes that it will complete, in one way or another, the information that Jones and Kurz gathered a little



A Limbu *phedangma* at a *dung dunge* ritual

farther south, in the region of Terhathum. I have deliberately avoided as much as possible any analysis or interpretation.

Various types of priests

The Limbu are neither Hindu nor Buddhist, even though numerous syncretic elements appear in their beliefs. They have a religion which is peculiar to them, a traditional religion 'without a name', that might formerly have been termed 'animistic'. It has its own mythology, its own pantheon of gods and goddesses, and its own group of priests.

The two principal categories of Limbu priests are the *phedangma* and the *bijuwā*. In the field, the distinction between them is not apparent, and in certain circumstances the functions of the two priests coincide. But even more, the differences between them seem difficult to define in the framework of our western concepts. In another article (Sagant 1973b:52) I have attempted an initial explanation which uses the Limbu cultural classifications.

The *phedangma* could be considered a 'tribal priest'. It is he who is called upon to remove impurity at birth, when the child is put in the cradle *(yangdang pokma)* (L). He also officiates at marriages[3] and accompanies the souls of the dead to the other world *(sam sama)* (L). He propitiates nature spirits at the time of the first tilling *(yoba tamma)* (L) and consecrates the seed *(yumang)* (L). Sometimes he drives away hail and makes offerings of the first fruits of the harvest *(thi sok, thok sok)* (L). He is frequently called upon to kill the pig and to offer it either to Yuma or to particular divinities such as Kemba, Paunglung, Kebo, etc ... He also conducts rituals associated with the heads of the family (Nahangma) or with social groups (Hangenna, Tongṣing). He propitiates the dead ancestors (Lumaeppa, Thamang), as well as the household gods (Yuma and Okwanama). He acts as an intermediary between men and the masters of nature (Tampungma, Toksongba, Narokma, etc ...). He assures the protection of pregnant women and is often called upon to take care of the sick. With the political chiefs *(subba)* he shares certain religious responsibilities involving the 'clan segments', natural calamities, epidemics, and the like. At the time of certain ceremonies, he can fall into a trance and become possessed, (for example, by the spirit of a deceased, at the time of the *sam sama* (L) ritual). On other occasions one of his souls *(sam)* is called upon to travel in the 'other world'

He has special gear (diverse necklaces, sometimes a turban, etc....) but he does not possess a robe or a harness of hand bells. The instrument he uses most often is the bell. Finally, in the area of cultural classifications, he is associated with the categories of the upper part *(tho)*, (L) the front or primogenitive *(tagana)* (L), and the right.

Very closely resembling the *phedangma*, if not perhaps identical to him, is the category of *samba* priests (Chemjong 1967:21).

The *bijuwā*'s functions complement those of the *phedangma*. He kills the fire spirit (*mi sam sepma*) (L) that may come to destroy a house. He kills the spirit of evil death (*sugut, sogha, wajik, sassik*, etc ...) that threatens the community. He averts jealousy (Nahen). He also conducts the ceremonies that must be performed after a case of incest *(lungdhung kai polema)* (L). Such ceremonies serve to restore an order that has been upset and manifested in everyday life by the fury of natural forces such as wind, rain, hail, lightning, or earthquakes. He intercedes, on behalf of the villagers, with his master spirits, especially the buzzard and the wildcat, famous sorcerers whose cooperation he can assure. On these occasions, he experiences possession and trances. He also can act as a medium. As in the case of the *phedangma*, one of his souls is able to travel in the other world. His material support is the bamboo pole, erected in the inner courtyard of the house where he officiates. He is associated with the categories of the lower part *(yo)*, (L) the back *(egang)* (L) and the left. He possesses a gear different from that of the *phedangma*, and more complete, consisting primarily of a long red and white robe, a headdress made of feathers, and a harness of hand bells and small globular bells. His instrument is the brass gong that he beats with a flat baton. In Limbu, the *bijuwā* are called *yaba* or *yama*, depending on whether it is a question of a man or a woman.

The *phedangma* and *bijuwā* are the most important priests of the community. There are, however, other categories of religious practitioners.

The *ongshi* (rather rare in the Mewa Khola) many times duplicates the functions of the *phedangma* and *samba*. They are sometimes compared to the 'lamas who retire to a grotto'. They experience possession and trances, as well as the 'journeys of the soul', but by another path which is 'underground'. The principal instrument used by the *ongshi* I knew in Lebang was the small cymbal *(jyamto)*.

In addition, there are other religious functionaries called *mangpa* or *mang tukpa*, 'those who suffer by the spirits', who are also subject to trance and possession. Among them, in the Mewa Khola, are the laymen called *kukusing*, especially women, who seem to correspond to the Nepali *boksi*. Others become possessed by the spirit, Yuma. The principal instrument is the drum *(ḍhyāṅro)* of the *jhākri*. They wear a long red and white robe, a turban resembling the royal crown of Yuma, and a harness of hand bells analogous to those of the *bijuwā* and the *jhākri*.

There are other types of religious practitioners who will only be mentioned here.

1. The *baiddang* ('doctors')[4] are often *phedangma* who, in addition to their other functions, take care of the sick by administering a certain type of 'medication' they have at their disposal.

2. The *satihangma* ('ascetics') are likened to the *sadhu* by many Limbu. They perform in square temple structures and play a bowed string instrument. They reportedly take hashhish.

The signs of the vocation

The following account by Muktuba, the *phedangma* of Libang, describes in his own words how he came to his vocation.

> 'When I was small, I was sick one day from having eaten pork. I like it though; I think it is the best meat but I am not allowed to eat it. My father and my grandfather were both great *phedangma*. When they saw that pork made me ill, they said that it was because of the *dentā*. They told me not to eat it anymore. But I did not have any *yoṅ* ('work': uncontrolled trance), I was merely sick. At night when I had to go out to piss, I had a terrible fear. I opened my eyes wide in the dark. Are the *dentā* there? Are they lying in wait for me? I pissed as quickly as I could and I ran back post-haste to the house.
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> 'In the same way, I quickly gave up the pleasure of eating at someone else's house. If I swallow something that was not cooked at my house, the *dentā* become angry and I get sick. Likewise, if relatives bring me a *phudong* (see Chemjong 1961:49) I can't touch it. Still today, I am called to houses to care for people, to do the rituals of *phak tok*, *lamiba*, *phakma*. The people, they serve me meat, they offer me alcohol, they bring me a *tongba* of beer. They say, 'Eat, why don't you eat?' Sometimes, to please them, I take a little. But immediately afterwards, I vomit everything, I have a headache, I feel out of sorts. It's always the same thing for those who are like me and for me myself, we must do the Manguenna ritual, appease the divinities of the body, Kemba and Payunlung, and offer incense to Yuma. Above all, we must do the *wahapma* (that is, purify) with water and wild lavender leaves *(titepāti nāmyoba)* (L).[5] After a moment, the *yoṅ* (uncontrolled trance) is over. You feel better. The *dentā* are appeased. But each time that you're impure, it starts again.
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> 'At night when I slept, I would get up and walk around. But I didn't know it. It was my parents who told me

in the morning. 'What happened to you?' they asked. 'You got up, and you left. We talked to you, but you didn't hear. We put you back to bed and you said nothing to us.' I didn't know why all this happened. My grandfather and my father knew. It was the *dentā* having fun.

'They also used to say, 'This child speaks alone'. I was on the veranda, my parents were in the house. I talked, I talked, I talked. My parents thought someone had arrived. My mother went out. There was no one. She asked: 'Who are you talking to?' She went inside and said to my father: 'He talks alone. Who can he be talking to?' my father grumbled. He repeated: 'What's he saying, what's he done?' When I talked like that, friends my age didn't understand anything I said. It was another language. Besides, they didn't play much with me. And I didn't have much of a desire to play with them. I was fine, alone in my corner.

'I remember, I must have been 12 or 13 at the time, it was at the time of the rice harvest. There was a big stack (of corn?) in the field of Bongrong. One night, like all the kids, I was going to lie there. It feels good in the straw. At night I woke up, I felt strange. Then suddenly, I had a cold feeling at the top of my head, at the place of the *ţupi* (N). This cool wind that hit me was a trick of Tampungma, the master spirit of the forest.

'Later my *nya* (father's sister) died. I was 14. I went to the funeral at Taksong's house, and I helped carry the stretcher to the cemetery. After that, I was sick for three months on end. My entire body hurt as if I had been beaten with a stick. I had a headache. Every night I had a high fever. To cure me, my father purified me with water and leaves of *titepāti* (N) and *samsing* (L). That wasn't enough so he performed the ritual of Nahangma. And he told me that in the future, I must not carry the dead, that I must let others do it. Today I still don't know why that happened to me. At the slightest sign of impurity, things go wrong. But at that time I didn't know it. No one told me anything.

'From that time on, a lot of things began to happen that I didn't understand at all. One evening, I was returning from a wedding at Kurungden. I came by the lower road, the one that goes by Namyobe's. In front of me I hear, 'Ching, ching, ching, ching'. The trees began making noise. I was panicky but I continued on. Before me, on the road, a large bamboo completely bent over and nearly blocked my path. I crawled under it and passed

Then two other bamboos began bending over right in front of me and once again I had to crawl past. All the trees were in a trance from Mule's house to Namyobe's. And I crawled, crawled, crawled in order to get past. When I arrived home, I went to bed, exhausted. The following morning I ran to the place where the first bamboo had bent down. Nothing. There was nothing. All the bamboos were perfectly straight. That again was Tampungma's trick. It's not that she is angry, no, she is just having fun. She does things like that to those who will become priests. She could have stolen my soul, made me sick; no, she just had a good time. Today, she doesn't give a damn about the old ones. She does it to the young. Only the young ones interest her.

'When I was about 16, I went to Sikkim for the first time. There were seven of us. We were carrying potatoes. The road was steep. We arrive at a *cautāra* (N). We put down the baskets, we sat down to catch our breath. We rolled a cigaret and began talking. Near the *cautāra* and a little farther down the hill was a small mountain stream that crossed the path we had just climbed and continued flowing into the jungle. From where I was sitting, I saw an old woman arrive. She was carrying a small basket and had a sickle in her hand. I was watching her when all of the sudden she disappeared by the stream. I turned towards my friends and said, 'Did you see how that old lady disappeared?' They looked surprised. They hadn't seen anything. And yet we were all sitting the same way, facing the wind to cool off. I thought they had seen her as I had. But no, it was Tampungma again.

'Things like that happened to me so many times! One night in Sikkim I had asked to spend the night in a house by the road. I slept in the shelter of the grain-polishing machine *(ḍhiki)* (N). The house was surrounded by a small wall of dry stones. At night I awoke to this noise' (he rattled the lid of the teapot'. 'I pulled out my *khukuri* (N) from beneath my pillow. Crouching, I walked along the wall. I arrived at the place from where the noise came: nothing. So I returned to where I was sleeping and I quickly said: 'Tampungma, I know it's you. Go your way, I'll go mine'. At such times, if you have *achetā* (N) (grains of rice to offer) you must throw some around. If you don't have any, it's sufficient to recite. I wondered what would happen. The following day I was asked to work in the cardamon fields of the same house. So I stayed there. Three nights later I was sleeping on the veranda when I suddenly felt I was being strangled. I managed to get up, I vomited, but there was no one. Inside the

house, my boss had certainly heard something but he was afraid and said nothing. In the morning he questioned me. 'What happened last night? Why all that noise? Did you lose your breath *(sas)* (N)? I had the feeling someone was choking you'. I said nothing. But five days later, Kapoba (a divinity of the *siuk* of Yuma) attacked the old man. He had pain in his ears and throat, everywhere. He died within two days. Since the time that Tampungma had signalled me from behind the wall, I knew that the *dentā* had it in for that house. I knew what was going to happen. She had warned me twice.

'When I was a kid, I didn't have trances but the *dentā* played tricks on me. Not all the *dentā*; expecially Tampungma. Never Shenga; sometimes Koccoma. Toksongba, yes, a little. But it was mainly Tampungma. It all began when I was about 16 or 17. I didn't see Toksongba but I heard her. For example, at night, you're in bed and hear someone whistle very loudly. You get up, take out your *khukuri*, but there's no one. Then you understand. You sit cross-legged and appease Toksongba by throwing her a few grains of rice. 'Toksongba', you say, 'don't be angry, be on you way, etc ...' Why the *khukuri*? Because with the *khukuri* one can drive away the *sogha* if it is they who are attacking. I often heard Toksongba. At night she would come down the streams and shout, 'hoo hoo!' At these times, it's a good idea for the villagers to lock themselves up at home. When she makes these sounds, it's because she's warning us that someone in the village will die. As for hearing her, I really heard her. And each time I announced that, someone would become sick. But as for seeing her, I never saw her, whereas Tampungma, I saw her often. But it sufficed to close my eyes and when I opened them again, she had disappeared.

'Dreams, at that time, I had a lot of them. But I have forgotten them. Oh yes! For example, I dreamed that I was dancing *(dhān nac)*; I was with boys and girls, and I sang with a very pretty girl (a partially improvised traditional love song accompanying youth dances). Or else I dreamed that I was in bed with a woman and that we made love. I awoke; no one, no woman next to me. But I knew that a woman had been there because I was wet. These dreams about girls can have three possible meanings. Either one of your close relatives is going to die, or else there will be a flu epidemic, or else it's the master-spirit of the *bijwā* who was with you. My path is not that of the *bijwā*. And that type of dream, I didn't have it very

often; about eight times perhaps. Tale is a *bijuwā* and he told me that happened often to him. However, in my case, it really was the master-spirit of the *bijuwā* who was having fun with me because afterwards, in the village, I paid attention, neither dying relatives nor the flu.

'When they are men, the *bijuwā*'s master spirit is a woman. And when they are women it's the opposite. The *bijuwā* should not marry. If he goes to bed with a woman, his master-spirit, a woman, becomes furious. She is jealous. She gives him trances; you should see them. If he begins dancing, it is she who makes him dance. It's as if I went with another woman and my wife knew it.

'Tale, we were the same age and we often went to dances together (the youth dances). After he had sung all night with a pretty girl, you should see what happened to him next. He jumped up and down. They said, *'Yepme thungma le lupto, naheto'* (L), 'his *guru* beat him, she is jealous.' Nahito: it's Nahen, it's the same thing (deified jealousy).

'In these cases, to appease her, you must do a darn long ritual. You take the path of Nahangma. You arrive at the Crossroads of Three Paths *(sum lamdoma)* (L). Then you accompany your offering as far as the village of your master-spirit *(yepme thungma pangphe)*. It's the same thing for the *yuma*. It can be a man or a woman. It is only for the *phedangma* and the *ongshi* that it's different. Woman *phedangma* or *ongshi* don't exist. We *phedangma* and *ongshi*, we can dance, marry, make love as much as we want. Our *guru* doesn't become angry. They only become angry when we're impure. We *phedangma*, when we have a sex dream, we have to do a ritual. But it's a small ritual, to get purified. It's not at all like the ritual the *bijuwā* does to appease his mistress.

'There's another dream that comes back to me. I often had it in the past. I would climb up a path and emerge always at the same spot: before a large rock that blocked the road. It was hollow underneath. I went in on all fours and crawled along. But at the end, it was closed off by a rough part of the rock. So I retraced my steps and came back down.

'Since I had been sick and had the Nahangma ritual, my parents knew that all these things were signs. But I didn't know it. I only learned it later. They told me nothing. But my father, when he sacrificed to Nahangma to cure me, had performed divination; he had left on the Dahayma's path. He had reached the *co-lung* (L) in the East (mythical residence of Nahangma). He had taken the

path of the *phedangma*, to the right, and he had seen our three lives. There were two large flowers, my grandfather's and my father's. And next to them, a small sprout that was I. Then he understood that if the small sprout grew, the two flowers would die; that is, the day I would become a *phedangma*, he and my grandfather would disappear. So that day, he and my grandfather decided that they would have to postpone the time that I would become a *phedangma* so that they could live. And this same day, while doing the ritual of Nahangma, my father blocked my path *(lam sakma)* (L) to the 'other world'. He did this to prevent me from becoming a *phedangma*.

'It was therefore rather late that I became a *phedangma*. All at once things happened. One evening, my father came home and announced that he was to go to Tangemba's house to do a *mundhum* (recitation of a Limbu myth). He stopped before me and told me to go to the fields of Tengma to close the irrigation canals of the rice fields. I ate and after dinner I left. I began work in the fields. With stones, leaves and earth I closed a canal at the bottom and then above and then again above. I raised my head and what did I see by the opposite house, about 100 feet away? A man, stooped over like I was and doing the same work. I couldn't see well. Night began to fall. I thought that it was Taksong Saila since his fields were next to ours. I set to work again. I raised my head and this time I was sure, it wasn't Taksong. I looked closely. I had the impression it was my father. I said to myself, that's not possible, my father is doing the *mundhum* at Tanyemba's. That can't be he. I looked again. This time, no doubt, it was my father, I was sure. I said nothing. I began working again, I worked as fast as I could. I was afraid. I returned home, but my father was not yet there. I went to bed. The next morning, he returned from Tanyemba's house. I got up immediately and asked him if he had come to the fields the previous evening. And I explained it all to him. He did not answer me. I started my story again. I asked again if it was he. He still didn't answer. That time I understood. It was the sign that he was going to die. That evening he performed the ritual to the planets, to Tongsing, to Nahangma, to Manguenna, etc. ... That happened in September. On February 2 he was dead. On March 5, my grandfather was dead. Then in the entire valley, after the funeral, they came to get me: Maila Subba, Modemba, Baedar, Kapoba and others. They said, 'Your father is dead. Your grandfather is dead. Who will do the ritual now in the village? It must be you.' 'But I can't,' I answered. 'I don't know anything, I didn't learn anything; I have never done a ritual.' 'What should we do?' they said. 'It's time for

you to get started!' 'There are other *phedangma* in the village,' I said, 'go find them!' 'No,' they answered, 'It must be you!' They finally convinced me. Then the *mundhum* came very quickly. The others had been *phedangma* for a long time. I had just started and I soon surpassed them. It was as if the *mundhum* had come all by itself.

'Later when I became a *phedangma* I had the same dream as before, the one about the rock and the path. As before, I crawled through the rock. But at the end the way was free. And I could continue climbing the road ...'

Violence as the sign and power of the priests

The signs of Muktuba's calling, aside from his illness, are not dramatic. In his case, the family's influence and social pressure were determining factors. They were particularly significant for this adolescent gifted with unusual sensitivity and a very vivid imagination. Besides, Muktuba wanted to become a *phedangma*. To this type of priest, by far the most common, in particular among the *phedangma*, the Limbu give the name *thapmura*, those whose calling is manifested without much violence. I do not imply that violence is totally absent in Muktuba's case. It appears for example in the relationship between his father's death and his role as a *phedangma*.

But it remains unconscious and repressed. This type of vocation is considered synonymous with a lukewarm choice on the part of the spirits. In Libang the most typical priest in this respect is one of Muktuba's paternal uncles, Kancha *phedangma*. He was a kind old man with three small sons. In his case, the contact with spirits at the time of his adolescence was quite minimal. As a youth, he submitted to the teaching of a master. A good worker, he laboriously learned the myths and rituals. He spent eight or nine years doing it, whereas others proceed much more quickly. His power as a priest came from a single mythical verb. But he could never have become a 'great priest', one of those who fly, who know the myth without learning it, and foresee the destiny of each person with constant infallibility.

For the latter priests, the Limbu reserve the name of *muke*, 'powerful'. Their power is linked to violence as a sign of their vocation. This violence is manifested in uncontrollable trances, serious illnesses, sudden possessions, brutal behaviour in the case of impurity, and loss of consciousness. Multiple and repeated sufferings are the mark of a privileged choice by the spirits. This type of priest generally meets his suffering with resistance and often experiences a precocious vocation. It is said that the calling may become apparent at birth. For example, the umbilical cord wrapped around a child's neck is taken as a sign that he will

become a great *bijwā*. I was told of the case of a priest of Yuma, from the hamlet of Marapanghe in the Tambar Khola, who was considered a priest of great power. He belonged to the Thoebung clan. Yuma's presence in him became apparent at the age of three when he suffered periods of lapses in consciousness. However, it is generally around eight or nine that the *muke* priests experience characteristic disorders, which become more frequent with age and culminate during adolescence. At the age of 14, Kapoba, the priest of Yuma at Libang, fell into a trance at the mere sight of a *bijwā* headdress. At 16, Idhbuma experienced possessions he could not control. It is often the public display of a violent crisis that brings the villagers to progressively recognize the first signs of a vocation. I had thought for a long time that only the *bijwā* and the priests of Yuma were subject to such symptoms, particularly the uncontrollable possession. The following account, given by a layman, shows that this is hardly the case. It concerns an adolescent who was to become a *phedangma*.

> 'It was at the time of a funeral ceremony *(barakhi)*. The entire village of Syama was assembled. Many had made a two or three day walk. Mourning had begun, toward the end of the afternoon. Then the people from the deceased's clan invited all the guests to dinner. That night we were in a field near the house (of the deceased). Huts were set up so that the guests could sleep. We, the adolescents, were dancing in our corner. Farther away, the elders sang *samlo* in small groups. The girls of the house (of the deceased) passed from one to the other with wooden bottles of liquor in their arms. They poured it for each one. This is how it began. Tate was then 16 or 17. He danced with us. He was a neighbour of the deceased but did not belong to the clan. He drank the liquor several times and began to show disorderly behaviour. Then he was overcome by a very violent trance. He ran home. He wanted to lock himself up. He was seen leaving the house, his sabre in hand, chasing away all his relatives. He ran after one of his sisters. From the terrace, he threw an enormous stone at her. She barely escaped. Everyone gathered around. Priests were there. They managed to approach him although he was still in a trance *(yoṅ)*. Little by little they calmed him by sprinkling him with lavender leaves that were soaked in a pot *(lohoṭā)* (N) of water (this is the *wahapma* purification ritual). Finally he lay doubled over on the ground, sobbing. That time nothing else happened.
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> 'But later, each time Tate ate or drank beer *(tongba)* in a house other than his own, it all began again. Soon he 'fled to the forest' every day. He would stay there for several hours and then return home on his own. Then, just like the first time, he would chase away all the

occupants with his sabre in his hand. Then, hiding behind the door, he would watch for their return.

'In the months that followed, he could no longer tolerate anyone. He always wanted to be alone. He terrorized his whole household, his father, mother, sisters, all fled from the house. When he was alone, he offered incense to Yuma. Once for a period of two weeks he forbade everyone from entering the house. His relatives moved into a neighbour's house. They sent him a *phedangma*. From the yard the *phedangma* shouted: 'You need someone to show you the way *(lam)*! Let me in!' 'I need no one', he howled. The myth *(mundhum)* comes by itself!' And this time, he sent him away. During this time, he had terribly violent trances. Later, when he had become a *phedangma*, the trances became less violent. Now that he is old, they have disappeared.'

The retreat in the forest

This retreat to the forest that we briefly mentioned in the case of Tate, the *phedangma* of Syamba, is a theme that frequently recurs in accounts describing the first stages of a vocation. The following is another report made by a layman in Libang. It concerns the 'flight to the forest' of a *bijuwā* of Signenem of the Pembasong clan. The *bijuwā* was named Dhan Rup. He has been dead for about ten years.

...'When he was a small boy, he was considered strange. They said, 'he speaks another language.' No one understood him. He liked to be alone. At eight or nine, he had only to hear the *bijuwā*'s hand bells and he could no longer control himself. At the sight of their feathers he would fall into a trance. At the age of 10 or 12, he was sick for a long time ... When he reached adolescence he would often devour anything he happened to find: herbs, stones, wood, even excrement. When he heard the sounds of the *ban jhākri* (see Macdonald 1962:122-125 and Hitchcock in this volume) drums coming from the forest, he would go off alone at night into the forest to follow the sounds. He would take a stick with which he hit the ground while walking. He would leave for the entire night. When he returned, he would beat a brass plate and dance in a trance. Or else he would remain prostrate in a stupor. He disappeared, 4 or 5 times, and stayed away for a day or two. His mother's brother was a *bijuwā*. His father was a *phedangma*, a great *phedangma*. It was they who went to look for him and bring back his soul.

'It was later, towards 17, that he fled for good to the forest. His father and his mother's brother could do nothing for him. They called upon other priests of the village. The entire hamlet gathered at his house. The *phedangma* consulted with each other. With beer, an egg, *cabong* (mixed cereal grains offered to the spirits), they invoked all the forest masters to help them find the boy by indicating the exact spot he could be found in the forest. They interceded with Tampungma, master of the forest; Toksongba, master of the mountain ridges; Shenga, master of the valley floors; Warokma, master of the waters; Koccoma, the bitch (dog), as well as other *dentā*. Then the *phedangma* left to look for his soul, and the entire village participated in the search.

'It was very difficult to find him. Later he himself told how he was frightened by the men who approached him. He saw them with enormous heads, enormous eyes, making hellish noises. He ran to hide. He burrowed in the most inpenetrable thickets. He followed his masters, the *ban jhākri* who led him farther and farther into the jungle to hide. He was finally found lying prostrate. But when they tried to seize him, he struggled furiously. He bit them, he tried to flee. They grabbed him by the wrists and took him by force. He took a copper plate and danced in a trance while beating on it. Once again, he was completely prostrate as if he were bound hand and foot, and he said, 'Oh my goats! Oh my young buffalo! Oh my father! Oh my mother! Let me go home! Let me go back to the forest! Here I am not at home! Why have you brought me here?' For five days in a row the priests took turns doing the *mang pokma* rituals without interruption. After five days a *phedangma* restored his soul to him by blowing into his ears. He was cured. He slowly regained his normal state. His fear of men disappeared.

'As soon as he had entered the forest he had thrown away his clothes. He lived there completely naked. The *ban jhākri* had a human appearance. They took good care of him. Better than a father or mother. They taught him to dance, to recite. They gave him cooked *tonajek* on the backs of their hands.

'The *ban jhākri* are the *guru* of the *jhākri*. But sometimes they also attract Limbu *phedangma* and *bijwā* into the forest. Laymen can hear them but cannot see them. In Limbu, the *ban jhākri* are called Tampungma, Toksongba, and so forth.

'If they had not gone to look for him he would not have come back on his own; he would have died. A great *phedangma*

must look for him or else they will find nothing. Sometimes it takes a week to find the person who has fled. Sometimes it takes six months, or more. The longer one stays in the forest, the more he struggles when they come for him.

'In all the valley I have known two priests who stayed for a long time in the forest like that. Dhan Rup, about whom I just spoke, and Phojongma, who lives above Nalbu. What has become of him? He used to jump like this when he was in a trance!'

This theme of the flight into the forest poses particular questions I am presently unable to answer. The Limbu who mention it always insist on the responsibility of the *ban jhãkri*, the master spirits of the Nepali *jhãkri*. Only later do they explain that the Limbu equivalents of the *ban jhãkri* are the spirits of Tampungma, Toksongba, etc. ... Furthermore, the informants often contradict each other. Some of them deny the fact that a Limbu *phedangma* can be attracted by *ban jhãkri* and retreat to the forest. Other subscribe to this possibility but make a distinction between the fate of the Limbu priests and that of the Nepali *jhãkri*. The former, 'can, if need be, come back themselves'. That would never be possible for the latter, who 'must always be called back' or else they might die. Finally, the 'flight to the forest' is not an indispensible step in the vocation of a Limbu priest. Neither Huktusa, the *phedangma* nor Kapoba, the *yuma*, to mention only the most highly regarded priests of Libang, underwent such an experience.

Heredity and the Vocation

The influence of the family group seems to play an important role in the appearance of new vocations. The same family often include several priests in its ranks. From generation to generation the vocations are renewed. The family line of Muktuba, the *phedangma* of Libang, is typical in this respect; it seems to be a nursery for priests. The grandfather was at once a very renowned *phedangma*, a particularly feared sorcerer and a 'doctor' *(baiddang)*. In the following generation, the father and the father's younger brothers were *phedangma*. A sister became a *bijuwāri*. Only the youngest brother remained a layman. In the next generation out of fourteen descendants two became *phedangma* Muktuba and an immigrant cousin, who today lives in Assam, and two *bijuwāri*, the two younger sisters of Muktuba.

This is not an isolated example. The father of the *ongshi*, Netang, was himself an *ongshi*; the father of the *bijuwā*, Lungwaba, was himself a *phedangma*; his mother's brother was a *bijuwā*. The same pattern is found in the case of Dhan Rup, the *bijuwā* whose

'flight to the forest' we discussed. The brother of Kuposa's mother was also a priest of Yuma; and the brother of the *bijuwā* of Tempe's mother was a *bijuwā*. In the villages of Syamba and Dunwa, two of the *phedangma* have fathers holding this same function. In Libang, it is rare to find priests who do not have at least one religious practitioner in their ancestry. This would be the case of Yakoba and Take, both *bijuwā*. But these examples are perhaps not convincing for they lack conclusive evidence beyond the second generation.

Observation of these facts leads us to establish a possible link between heredity and priesthood. However, the facts are diversely interpreted by the various informants.

Patrilineal affiliation is recognized in the case of the *phedangma*. But it is not conclusive, they say, as a religious phenomenon. Only matrilineal affiliation would be. It is on the side of the maternal ancestors that religious heredity is sought. Tungwabe, Dhan Rup and the *bijuwā* of Tempe are all *bijuwā* because their mother's brother was. It is the same in the case of Kapoba, priest of Yuma. In Muktuba's family line, the fact that the grandfather was a *phedangma* is explained by going back still further to a maternal ancestor.

This filiation may skip generations. Muktuba explains this religious phenomenon by a comparison with the colour of the bitch-dog's fur: 'My bitch has red fur, she has black puppies ...'

Religious filiation exists only within the limited framework of each category of priests. A *bijuwā* cannot give birth to a *phedangma*, and vice versa. The father of the *bijuwā* Lungwasa was a *phedangma*. This fact is not significant on the religious level. However, his mother's brother was himself a *bijuwā*, and it is by the latter that Lungwasa's vocation is explained.

This filiation is expressed in the rituals. I was told that at the time of a *bijuwā*'s 'initiation ceremony', the village is assembled. The villagers approach the new *bijuwā* who dances, and they say: 'Where do you come from? You aren't a real *bijuwā* if you can't tell us where you come from!' They pretend to beat him. 'You don't please us!', they repeat. 'We don't like you!' Then the *bijuwā* who dances gives the name of a maternal ancestor who was himself a *bijuwā*. Everyone asks, 'Is it true that you came this way?' The *bijuwā* reaffirms his filiation and gives explanations. The entire assembly responds in chorus: 'That is good! You are really a *bijuwā*! You will predict the future for us. You will tell us who will become sick; who will die a violent death; which women will die in childbirth.' The new *bijuwā* begins his prophesies. To each person who asks what his destiny holds, he gives an explanation. Then everyone is happy. If the *bijuwā* cannot indicate his heredity, he is not recognized. They say,

'Oh, he will perhaps be able to perform some rituals here and there but he will never be a real *bijuwā*.'

It is with reference to the religious filiation on the maternal side that Muktuba explains how the priests appeared in Limbu country in general. In the beginning there was a *phedangma*, then a *bijuwā* from whom descended all the priests (of these two categories) who are alive today. Among the Limbu, residence is patrilocal. Only matrilineal filiation could permit the priests to appear in all the clans and all the villages. When he calls his master-spirits, the *phedangma* cites a very long litany of *phedangma* names. It is possible that the enumeration is intended to prove his relationship with the very first *phedangma*, the one belonging to the group of the Ten Limbu.

The future priest is dangerous

Until the end of his apprenticeship and especially during the period in which the signs of the vocation become manifest, the future priest is considered dangerous. It is said that he attracts the cruellest spirits of the creation. Possessed, he harbours them and becomes their instrument. He is identified with these master-spirits by those who say, 'he is a *shi-ya*.'[6] He is compared to a sorcerer, *(shi-re)*. He is feared. Modemba, a layman, tells how the *bijuwā*, Tale, had terrorized his neighbours before submitting to his vocation.

One of the neighbours had seen him in a dream one night in the form of a tiger entering his house. The story spread through the hamlet. Tale was finally compelled to recognize his vocation, dominate his master-spirits, become a *bijuwā* and 'assume his path'.

I had thought that the term *shi-ya* designated only the future *bijuwā* whose identity had not yet been revealed by the master-spirit during a trance. I also thought that only the possessed could be dangerous. The testimony of Muktuba, the *phedangma*, sheds doubt on this notion. He again raises the problem of the nature of the relationships existing between each category of priests and the world of spirits.

Here is his testimony: as we have seen, Muktuba's father postponed his son's vocation by the ritual of *lam sakma*. He blocked the road that leads the *phedangma* to the realm of Nahangma in the 'other world'. This explains the hallucination of bending bamboos; the dream about the rock on the path. 'As long as my path was blocked,' says Muktuba, 'I was a *shi-ya*. If my father had lived, if he had renewed the *lam sakma* ritual, I would be dead.' Thus, according to Muktuba, a future *phedangma* can also be called by the name *shi-ya*.

The *shi-ya* is not only dangerous to himself, but also to those near him. In Fimkhim, in the Tamur Khola, two *bijuwā* are husband and wife. The signs of the *bijuwāni*'s vocation appeared while she was pregnant. She gave birth to a boy. The new-born cried continuously and refused to nurse. He died two days after birth. His mother had unknowingly caused buzzard and wildcat spirits to come onto him. She was at that time unable to control these master-spirits. Thirsty for blood, they had rushed to the child at the moment of birth. In the new-born's back was a kind of wound, 'the flesh was knotted'. That was the mark of their attack.

In Libang, the *bijuwā* Lungwasa, had three children. All three died, they say, because he was a *shi-ya*. In Lingtep it is said that a man becomes a *bijuwā* so that his children might survive.

Even outside the household, the priest is a threat to the community as a whole. Phungba, one of my main informants in Libang, says that a *shi-ya* lived near his house. His wife was pregnant. He called the *phedangma* and asked him to block the path *(lam sakma)*. The *phedangma* made a small hedge of interlaced plants on the path between the two houses. The neighbour, learning the state of his wife, refrained from entering during the entire pregnancy and even several months after the birth. 'If he had come,' said Phungba, 'he would have shrieked before entering, *'thapu she shamo!'* 'Throw ash and embers!', in order that the spirits he had with him would be chased away.'

This dangerous period continues until the end of the apprenticeship, when the *mundhum* has been learned under the direction of a master. In Libang, Cupke's 'way' was recognized as being that of the *phedangma* when he was 18. But he never wanted to submit to the direction of a master and never underwent the *mundhum* instruction.

He was 34 when I knew him. One evening Tale, the *bijuwā*, was performing a ritual. The people of the village had come to see him dance. There were approximately 20 people seated in the yard. Cupke was also there. He accepted a beer *(tongba)* that the woman of the house offered him. Soon afterwards, he was overcome by fits of anger. Armed with his *khukuri* he lunged at his *subba*. Tale, the *bijuwā*, immediately gave him a gong and a clapper and made him dance with him. That night, Cupke collapsed. He sent his wife to Muktuba, the *phedangma*. Then he himself came. 'I am a *shi-ya*,' he repeated on the verge of a fit of hysterics. 'I don't know what I'm doing, I'm bad, I threaten people, I want to kill them. This time I came to ask you to be my master. I want to learn the *mundhum*. I give in to my vocation.

Sickness and the recognition of the vocation

In much the same way, with more or less rapidity and intensity, the vocation of the majority of priests in Libang was manifested. The vocation culminates one day with a serious illness. It is often at the time of this illness that the other priests, and with them the village, recognise the vocation. From this day, it is said that a new *phedangma* or a new *bijwā* has 'risen' *(pokma)*.

As a youth, the child may have appeared strange. As an adolescent, he may have been suspected of having contact with the supernatural. But these various symptoms are known only to the narrow circle of the household. One day, during adolescence, a public crisis may attract the attention of the village and, for the first time, priests will intervene. But they do not look for the deep causes of the evil. They only want to appease and perform a purification ritual *(wahapmā)*. This process may be repeated several times without leading to the recognition of the vocation.

Thus, in the case of Kapoba, the priest of Yuma, we had gone to a fair[7] that was held in the valley floor. Along the river, several families performed propitiatory rites to the master-spirits of nature (Tampungma etc ...) as well as to the Nepali *dentā* (Kalika Devi, Naga). An adolescent, in the middle of a small group attending the ceremony, was brutally seized by an uncontrolled trance. Kapoba watched for a long time. He turned toward me, asking himself these questions: 'By whom can he be mistreated this way *(bigārnu)* (N)? The planets? An enemy? Yuma? The *phedangma?* The *bijwā?* The *ongshi?* Who else?' He attentively watched the priest's purification. Once calm was restored, we continued on our way. Kapoba's questions were left without answer. These questions generally are posed until the answers appear as a vital necessity, that is, until the time of the serious illness.

As we have seen, Muktuba, at the age of 14, became seriously ill for three months after having carried the deceased's stretcher during the family mourning. It was at that time that his father performed the ritual of Nahangma and recognized his vocation, even though he concealed it.

A young girl from the hamlet of Tjungtjipung remained ill for six months. Priests took turns at her bedside, but they were all powerless to cure her. At one time, she was thought dead. Kapoba took his turn performing the *mundhum* of Yuma. At the end of the ritual, her condition improved. She was to become a priestess of Yuma.

Indramaya lives today in the village of Yakteli in the Maewa Khola. As an adolescent, she lived with her parents in Libang. While attending a *bijwā* dance one day she was possessed. Subsequent to this incident she fell sick. A *phedangma* finally revealed

her 'way'; she also was to be a consecrated priestess of Yuma.

Kapoba, at 13, went to live with his mother's family. As a youth, he lost consciousness at the sight of a *bijwā*'s headdress. In his mother's village of Nangphabung in the Mewa Khola, he became seriously ill. At night he was delirious, and they thought he was on the verge of death. His mother's brother, a priest of Yuma, recognized his vocation.

Tale, the *bijwā* of Libang, went to perform a ritual in the neighbouring village of Dunwa. People gathered at night to see him dance. An adolescent among the spectators was overcome with an uncontrollable trance. Tale noticed him, gave him a gong, made him dance, then purified him. He returned to Libang. They came for him several days later. He (the boy) was very ill. Tale came to his bedside and recognized him as a *bijwā*. His improvement was noticeable and continued until he was cured.

The above examples were obtained as they are discussed, that is, simplified to the extreme. They have in fact been reconstructed and elaborated by the villagers long after the actual event took place. We no longer find here the uncertainty that predominated at the time these events occurred. When the future priest is ill, a multitude of possible causes are in fact suggested, but these have disappeared from the informant's accounts. I believe that the actual recognition of the vocation is far from having the clarity that appears in these various reports.

In fact, it would seem that all the signs of a vocation previously described take on the character of obvious symptoms only long after the event. The trance is actually not the exclusive sign of a vocation. Among laymen, it can result from the displeasure of spirits such as Kemsa, Miku, Dungdungguey and still others, some of whom are considered associated with the human body. Possession can occur for instance among the *kukusing* sorcerers who will never become priests. Moreover, trances and possession are not indispensable in recognizing a calling. The case of the *phedangma*, Muktuba, seems convincing in this regard. Certainly it is true that once initiated, *bijwā* and *yuma* act according to the clearly institutionalized behaviour of the possessed in trance. But the clearly defined character of traditional rituals performed by confirmed priests is seemingly quite different from the behaviour that precedes the apprenticeship and the master's instruction. In other words, the illness of the future priest, no matter what symptoms may have preceded it, seems to be considered in the majority of cases, as an ordinary illness. The treatment, at least at the beginning, is not particularly significant. As in any illness, all categories of priests take turns at the patient's bedside. *Bijwā* and *phedangma*, *yuma* and *ongshi*, sometimes even *jhākri* and *lāmā*, each according to his own methods, look for the spirits or gods who may be responsible for the evil and who must be propitiated. But

there are many others. Did Tampungma or Toksongba steal one of the patient's souls? Does the tiger or buzzard eat his entrails? Is it an attack of bad-death *(sogha)* or of a woman who died in childbirth *(sugut)*? Is the evil due to the jealousy of a neighbour personified by Nahen or the curse of a next of kin? Or is it the displeasure of the household divinities Yuma or Okwanama who complain that they have been forgotten? Is it the attack of a sorcerer, and is it necessary to suck the body *(phingwa)* (L) in order to extract the cause of evil in the form of a hair, a small stone, or a grain of rice? Is it the spirit of the monkey *(saba sam)* (L) or the 'souls' of corpses *(let sam)* (L) in the tombstones *(sut lang)* (L)? In the case of a young girl, sick in Libang in 1966, 14 religious practitioners followed each other at her bedside and performed in less that two weeks, 70 to 80 rituals.

If the appearance of the vocation is not revealed, the various priests are sometimes prompted to compare their diagnosis, whether they follow each other or act together in concert. What seems interesting is that their methods are different depending on the category to which they belong.

Yuma and *bijuwā* act, at least in part, according to similar procedures. They call upon their 'master-spirits' and use the patient as a medium. Through the patient's mouth, the 'master-spirits' reveal their own identity and confirm the vocation. The priest of Yuma then dismisses Yuma. The *bijuwā* accompanies his 'master-spirits' to the 'other world' as far as their mythical residence. Then he blocks their path *(lam sakma)* and returns to the world of men.

The *phedangma* however proceeds altogether differently. He performs a ritual to the divinity Nahangma. At this time, he determines the path *(lam)* of his client, that is, his eventual vocation. It is this method that I will attempt to describe, while at the same time remembering that my material is fragmentary and its elaboration far from complete.

The paths of Nahangma

Only the *phedangma* can perform the Nahangma ritual. However, it must not be assumed that this ritual is reserved solely for cases of illness. Twice a year, once during the 'high season' and once during the 'low season', it is performed in each house of the village, in the name of each head of the family. Its principal goal is 'restoring' the warlike qualities to one of the 'souls' *(mukuma sam)* of the head of the household. When it is performed as a propitiatory rite, it becomes part of a group of ceremonies that can last three days at a time. It begins with the ceremonies devoted to the spirits of nature and some minor divinities, followed by the rituals dedicated to the ancestors in

the person of Lumaeppa. Next, at the same time as Nahangma, the ritual of Manguenna, is performed, which involves all the members of the family, including women and children. Finally, every three years, the planets *(graha)* and the great ritual of Tongsing, associated with the line of descendants, is performed. I will limit the description solely to the cult of Nahangma which closely overlaps that of Manguenna - the calling of the *guru*.

During the morning, the preliminary rites (propitiation of the spirits of nature, etc.) are performed. As evening approaches, the *phedangma* settles down on the terrace of the house, sheltered by the roof of the veranda, near the main door. Seated cross-legged, he proceeds to call his 'master-spirits', his *guru*, so that they might help him accomplish 'his journey to the other world'. He first recites some formulas that will protect him from eventual attacks of sorcery during this voyage. Before him, an assistant spreads some wet mud on the hard-packed earth (covering an area about the size of a winnowing basket).

They set down a copper plate, full of uncooked husked rice, *(achetā)* on which is placed a copper coin. Next to the plate, a copper pot *(lohotā)* full of water is placed. In this pot plant leaves tied in a bundle with a cotton thread are inserted. A small copper bowl *(baṭuko)* (N) full of uncooked husked rice is arranged amidst the above. Finally, some embers are added to the altar either on the ground or in a small baked clay censer. The *phedangma* puts some incense in the embers which gives off a sweet-smelling odour as it burns. Seated, the *phedangma* begins his chant and starts taking his gear from his satchel. The very monotonous chant describes the nightfall and the animals (all types of domestic and especially wild animals) as well as people who have fallen asleep. He repeats the chant with variations at each of the four cardinal points and then at the central point where he now sits.

Finally, he says, 'It is time to perform the ritual'. Still chanting, the *phedangma* describes the offerings made by the household. He throws a little *achetā* in the air. He repeatedly taps a coin against a plate. He then asks his *guru* to 'rise' *(pokma)* and help him perform the ritual in the names of the family. May they leave together. May they avert the traps on their path. One by one he pulls his necklaces from his satchel and puts them around his neck. He also lays down pieces of his gear that he describes in his chant and that will bring him power, such as the dagger *(thuvini)*, porcupine quills, a rock-crystal, a lightning stone, bear and tiger teeth, a wild-boar tusk, a horn made from a 'tiger bone' that he blows, and a bell that he rings. At the same time, he lists, while chanting, the *guru* who will help in his undertaking. First a long litany of *'tamsa'*. Then a shorter one of *bijuwā*; then *ongshi*, *lāmā*, *ojhā*. From time to time he interrupts himself to explain once again what he expects of them. After these long litanies comes a similar enumeration of the divinities

(mang), which are of all types. They take the names of rivers, mountains, waterfalls, lakes, all geographically determined. There are also the human spirits (like Warokma), the Nepali *dentā* (such as the Nāga, the Devil). He finishes by hitting the copper coin on the plate, blowing his horn and above all ringing his bell. It is said that at the end of the appeal, 'the *guru* have risen', and that they rest on the *phedangma*'s shoulders. They are ready to begin the journey with him; the *phedangma* has been invested with the power enabling him to undertake his 'voyage'. At no time was he in a trance.

The altar of Nahangma

After summoning the *guru* there generally follows a pause during which the *phedangma* drinks the *tongba* he has been offered. Inside the house, the construction of the various altars of Lumaeppa, Nahangma, Manguenna is completed. They are all located in the upper part *(tho)* of the house, against the wall. The altar of Nahangma is made of a rectangular cushion of banana leaves. At the four corners are bamboo sticks representing the beer container filled with water and unfermented grain. Those that are near the wall do not have straws; the others have. On the banana leaves they have set a plate of uncooked husked rice with a coin, a little salt, ginger, pepper, and a sweet-smelling herb called *fungkhimba* (L). On this plate there is also a copper pot full of water in which they have dropped leaves bound by a cotton thread. Against the wall, at the head of the altar and against a screen of banana leaves, they have placed a shield made of skin. The shield is in the centre. To the right of the shield, from the viewer's standpoint, is a sword, to the left, an arch decorated with leaves.

First part of the ritual: recitation of the myth[8]

The *phedangma* is inside the house, in the high part, facing the altar of Nahangma, his back towards the central pillar. The ritual to Lumaeppa may have previously been performed. The women scatter to the low part of the house. The *phedangma* sits crosslegged, a turban around his head, the sword, point up, in his right hand. He begins reciting the myth of the origin of Nahangma. Incense burns before the altar. The *mundhum* begins softly amidst the cries of children and various discussions. Little by little calm is established. The spectators, for the most part members of the household, listen.

This myth narrates the origin of the Ten Limbu, the appearance of the first *phedangma* and the first *bijuwā*, the origin of the rituals to Nahangma and Manguenna.

Describing the circumstances at length, the *phedangma* explains

how Sutjuru Suhampheba and Jelara Tahadongma became husband and wife. They have 17 children. They realize belatedly that their union is incestuous. They must separate. They decide to divide their children between the two of them. They construct a sieve of gold and silver. The children are thrown into the sieve. Eight of them pass through the sieve. They go down to what is today Limbu country. They are called *jet hang*, the Eight Kings. The eight others who remain at the surface of the sieve will go up to the sky. The last one, called Sakta Bindu, is caught in the mesh. It is decided that he will accompany those who go to the sky. His eight brothers and himself will henceforth be called the Nine Kings *(phang hang)*.

After settling in the lower world, the Eight Kings encounter various tribulations. They decide to ask for the help of the Nine Kings. The youngest child is designated as a messenger. He goes to join the Nine Kings in the residence of Ningwa Phuma, the creator. His father receives him and listens to him; he refuses to leave his first eight sons; but with reservations he finally consents to let Saktu Bindu, the ninth son, descend towards the domain of the Eight Kings.

On the way, Saktu Bindu behaves recklessly. He falls into trances. He beats trees. He beats his father's sister *(nya)*. He strikes down a house built with eight straw twigs. From above, his angry father watches. He decides to intervene. He catches Saktu Bindu and fiercely knocks him down.

At the spot where Saktu Bindu falls, the earth opens and begins to shake. Then, one after another, there appears a spring *(Tumiahang Dhāra)*, stones *(pok lung)*, a sword, a shield, and Nahangma, the warrior divinity who will, from that time on, animate one of the souls of each of the Eight Kings *(makuma sam)*.

The Eight Kings experience still more misfortune and sickness. Once again, the youngest is delegated to go to the realm of Ningwa Phuma. The latter causes him to have a dream and then sends him to the spot where Saktu Bindu fell. Coming from the 'fountain of the *phedangma*', he finds the first *phedangma*. He brings him back with him to the Eight Kings. Inspired by the youngest son's dream, the Eight Kings ask the first *phedangma* to perform for the first time the ritual to Nahangma and Manguenna.

Once again the Eight Kings experience numerous problems including the attack of *sogha* (wandering spirit, dead from a violent death). The youngest son returns to ask for help from Ningwa Phuma. At the spot where Saktu Bindu fell, coming from the 'spring of the *bijuwā*' he meets the first *bijuwā*. He takes him back with him to the Eight Kings. For the first time the *bijuwā* 'kills the *sogha*' and performs other rituals.

The Eight Kings, the *phedangma* and the *bijuwā* constitute henceforth the Ten Limbu. The spot where Saktu Bindu fell is called *sum lamdona*, the Crossroads of the Three Paths or the Confluence of the Three Springs. To the left, the spring and path of the *bijuwā*. In the water, the spring and path of the laymen. At the right, the spring and path of the *phedangma*; the entire area is called the *co-lung*. This is the domain of Nahangma.

A rather long pause follows. The *phedangma* changes his position. He moves before the altar of Manguenna. He performs the first part of this ritual, reciting the myth of the migrations of the Ten Limbu, the appearance of the Lhasa and Kashi *gotra* and the establishment of each of the Ten Limbu in a certain area. At the end of this first part of the ritual of Manguenna, two chickens are sacrificed in the name of each member of the family, including women and small children.

Another pause follows and the *phedangma* once again moves before the altar of Nahangma.

Second part of the ritual: the ascent towards the 'other world'

During this second part, the *phedangma* undertakes his ascent to the 'other world' to offer a chicken to Nahangma in the name of the head of the house. In exchange the soul *(mukuma sam)* of the head of the house, will be regenerated with warlike energy.

The *phedangma*, still sitting cross-legged, holds the sword in his right hand, the point driven in the ground. Incense burns again. He throws *achetā* towards the altar of Nahangma, then towards the chicken. It is a fat male chicken whose feathers must be red. The *phedangma* takes a copper pot, set next to him before the altar. The pot is full of water in which there are stems of *namyoba*. Using the latter as a brush, he throws a few drops of water toward the chicken. He then gets up and, holding the sword with the top in the air, he cites the names of the head of the family, his clan, his village, the founder of his proto-clan (one of the Ten Limbu). He cites the date and begins his chant. The head of the house is at this time crouching behind him, plucking and eviscerating the chicken sacrificed to Manguenna. The *phedangma*, still chanting, again invokes his *guru*. He asks them, and will continue asking them intermittently, to climb still higher towards the *co-lung*, the domain of Nahangma; he asks them to open up the way, to clear the traps that have been set; the way has perhaps been erased by the chant of another *phedangma* who did not know the steps? Perhaps it will be necessary to drive away Nahen (jealousy), who might be waiting in ambush, summoned by someone in the village? May they resist the attacks of sorcery, appearing in the form of beetles (Yuwa) or hornets on behalf of Warokma, master of the waters. May he oppose the attempts of the

let sam, souls of corpses living in tombstones erected on tombs *(sut lung)* that Tampungma, master of the forest, sometimes uses as soldiers. He makes the most important 'master-spirits' help him. He urges them to imitate, during this journey, the migratory birds *(karangwa)* who return each year to Tibet. He tells them to take their places, one after another, on the path. Leading the way, the Spirit of Five opens a wide road. Then comes Wasang Samba, 'the *samba* of the *bijuwā* headdress', armed with a shot gun, watching out for Nahen, Then the three-year-old elephant *(sumtong hatti)* followed by the bear *(makyu)*, the wild pig *(sara)*, and the *phedangma* himself. The *phedangma* carries the soul of the head of the family as a yak carries its load; he complains sometimes of being tired from the weight. Next, may come his disciple who recites after him each sentence of the *mundhum* as well as numerous other 'master-spirits' who may be invoked on various occasions. The tiger *(keba)* closes the march and assures the rear guard. The family members continue to go about their work, but they repeat in chorus the *phedangma*'s exhortations.

The first step of the 'journey' is the central pillar of the house *(hang sitlang)*, then the second floor, and then the ridge beam *(mukum thakma)*. At this point, the *phedangma* calls upon Khajeling Samba to help him see the road, clear the traps and predict the fate that awaits the master of the house. 'Look, *guru*, look closely, so the jungle does not prevent you from seeing; will his body be sick? Will he have a fever?' Khajeling Samba may speak through the mouth of the *phedangma*. Then the *phedangma* and those accompanying him arrive at the thatched roof *(lingbongba lam)*, at the edge where water runs off in the rain *(suktungba lam)*. From there they go to the inner yard of the house. Once again the *phedangma* urges his master spirits to continue moving upwards *(tho lam peguiro)*.

Then comes the traditional steps that are found on the path of Nahangma as well as on that of other rituals (Lumaeppa, *sam sama*, Tongsing). Each time there is a difficulty, or whenever danger must be averted, the *phedangma* stands before the altar, inspired by his *guru*, and waves his sword as if he were beating himself. In certain cases he may be in a trance.

When the *phedangma* finally reaches the Crossroads of the Three Paths and Confluence of the Three Springs, *(sumjiri sumlamdo lam)*, he stops. Before him stretches the domain of Nahangma, called *co-lung*. To his left, the 'path of the *bijuwā*', where the first *bijuwā* appeared. Before him 'the path of the laymen' *(tumiahang lam)* where Saktu Bindu, by falling, caused Nahangma to appear. Finally, to his right, the path of the *phedangma*. The *co-lung* that the *phedangma* sees from the crossroads appears to be an immense field of flowers, each one of them symbolizing a human life. Those nearest him are the adolescents, while those farther away are the women, and finally the men.

The *phedangma* stands before the altar, his sword in his hand as the head of the family approaches him. He stands behind and to the left of the *phedangma*, facing the altar of Nahangma in the high part of the house near the central pillar. The *phedangma* turns around and gives him the sword which he will hold in his right hand.

The chicken of Nahangma is removed from the basket. Cupping it in his hands, the *phedangma* approaches the layman. He passes behind him. He places the chicken first on his left shoulder, then on his right, then on his head. The *phedangma* then begins to shake slightly, especially in the lower part of his body. These various gestures are repeated several times. The people of the household help the *phedangma* with their exclamations. The priest then places the chicken at the layman's feet, first in front of them, then behind. Then he gives the chicken to the head of the house who holds it against his body in his left hand, the sword still in his right hand.

The *phedangma* then takes the chicken back. He walks toward the altar of Nahangma. For a long time he holds the chicken cupped in his hands before the altar. Again he says the names of his client, his clan, his village, the ancestor of his proto-clan. Then comes the most important divination of the ritual.

In performing the divination, the *phedangma* follows certain patterns. He first must determine in which direction the chicken should be oriented in order to reach the domain of Nahangma. By the path on the left, the man is recognized as a *bijuwā*, by the middle, the laymen *(tumiahang)*, or the head of the house, and to the right, *phedangma*, *samba*, *ongshi*, even *yuma*. This point in the ritual of divination also permits the recognition of a vocation. Although I am unable to give details or interpret this information, I was told about an adolescent who had become ill and called a *phedangma* to perform the ritual of Nahangma in the name of his father. 'The *phedangma* remarked that the paths of the father and son were not the same, that they must be separated or the son would die. The former had the path of the layman, the latter was on the *phedangma*'s path. On this day, two Nahangma were performed; one for the father, still head of the house, the other for the son who became a *phedangma*'.

The *phedangma* can also prophesy after observing the flower that symbolizes the life of his client. Bent, withered, or faded, it may announce an illness or approaching death. We saw such an interpretation in the account given by Muktuba, the *phedangma* of Libang. Another example of the same procedure was told to me as follows: 'A father was old, he had three married sons who lived with him. The *phedangma* performed the ritual of Nahangma, in the name of the father, just as he had done every year. Then he realized that the ritual should be done in the name of the eldest son. The father decided to divide up his possessions and this resulted

in the segmentation of his house'.

Other symbols are used in the divination of *sum lamdoma*. The *phedangma* can throw stones *(pok lung lepma)* towards one of the three paths. If the stones break, it is a bad sign. He can also observe the behaviour of a sacrificial chicken, let loose on the packed ground of the house. 'There are many people in the *co-lung* so you must move around to make room for yourself. The chicken helps in doing that. He pecks at people's feet so that they spread out. If you cannot make room for yourself in the *co-lung*, you die'.

This type of divination again poses questions concerning the relationship between the priest and the world of spirits. I attended the Nahangma several times. Only once was the *phedangma* in a trance. In the majority of the cases he said afterwards, that his predictions were based on an interpretation of his shuddering or his visions, ideas that his master-spirits had given him.

During the entire time that the *phedangma* offers the live chicken before the altar of Nahangma, the head of the house and the *phedangma* himself do a war dance. Standing before the altar, they both shout. The layman waves his sword, yells, stamps his feet. He turns around in circles several times. The *phedangma* (only in certain cases observed) turns towards him, takes the sword and with the point traces a circle on the ground around the layman. Once the layman's soul *(mukuma sam)* (Chemjong 1961:358) finds a place, the *phedangma* tells it to be strong and healthy and to stay in the *co-lung*.

Then the *phedangma* turns towards his assistant. He either gives Nahangma's chicken to him or puts it on the ground. He throws some *achetā* towards the animal. He takes the brass pot. He removes the leaves and pours water on the chicken's head. If the chicken shakes itself off, it is a sign that Nahangma accepts the offering. I once saw a chicken that refused to dry off. This was a sign of refusal. The head of the house and his wife were upset. Finally, after a last try, the chicken shook itself dry and the family laughed with relief.

The *phedangma* takes his sword back from the layman's hands and turns towards the altar of Nahangma. His assistant holds the chicken in his left hand. With a club in his right hand, he breaks the chicken's back. He immediately approaches the altar, and holding the chicken head down, he waits for a few drops of blood to flow from the beak onto two small pieces of banana leaves cut for this purpose. The *phedangma* mimes a war dance, his sword raised high. All the onlookers cry: 'Did the blood flow?' *(maki kere-i)*. The *phedangma* yells out *(kererо)*, 'It is there'. The assistant pulls a few feathers from the end of the wings, from the tail, from the feet, the neck. He places them on the altar of Nahangma. Then the *phedangma* drives his sword into the ground. He interrupts the ritual. He takes the two small pieces of banana leaf and predicts

the future according to the configuration of the drops of blood. He passes them to the members of the family. I once saw a man quite upset because an air bubble was mixed in the drop of blood. They said that was a sign of death. 'Yes', said the *phedangma*, 'it is a sign of death. But it is not certain that it applies to you. Perhaps death will strike a house in the village, perhaps elsewhere'. Then he added: 'We must verify it by looking at the other signs'. There was a pause. Calm was once more restored. The *phedangma* who supposedly travels in the other world, takes his beer. The sacrificial chicken is scalded, plucked and eviscerated. The entrails are examined; this either confirms or invalidates the previous divination. His intestines are examined *(kuhiki)* as well as the colour and state of the liver *(kulungma)* and the kidneys *(kusengma)*. In most cases, these signs indicate something about the family's prosperity (money, harvests). The *phedangma*, sitting calmly before his beer, waits for the chicken to be completely eviscerated and plucked. The animal is put on a plate before the altar. The entrails, roasted in the ashes, are eaten by the family beginning with the master of the house *(parsad)*. The *phedangma* then moves to the altar of Manguenna again. He performs the second part of this ritual, during which each member of the family offers two small cups of water at the central pillar, the hearth, the two doors, etc ... The altar of Manguenna is then destroyed. Again a pause. Then the *phedangma* moves to the altar of Nahangma, to perform the last part of the ceremony.

Third part of the ritual: the return

During this last part of the ritual of Nahangma, the *phedangma* returns to the house from *co-lung*. He carries with him the layman's soul *(mukuma sam)* that had been regenerated by the offering of the chicken. At the end of the sequence, he restores the soul to the head of the family. The *phedangma* sits cross-legged before the altar, sword in his hand, with the point up. The steps of his journey are enumerated in the same way as before but, of course, in reverse order. The same scenario is repeated, although the 'descent' is generally shorter than the 'climb'. Nevertheless, at each difficult passage, the *phedangma* again calls upon his master-spirits. He mimes the struggle to open the path, his sword in his hand. He can be seized by a trance and one of his 'master-spirits' may speak through his mouth. He may be threatened by dangers analogous to those of the ascent. When he reaches the last stage of his journey, the central pillar of the house, he stands up. He pretends to throw some pieces of flesh from the chicken placed before him towards the altar. Then, by waving his sword and kicking, he destroys the altar of Nahangma. From the beginning of this sequence, he holds in his left hand either the turban, or the hat *(ṭopi)* (N) belonging to the head of the family, who stands behind him. The *phedangma* approaches the layman. He puts the plate of Nahangma in his left hand, the sword in his right. He puts his turban (or

hat) back on his head. The head of the house again begins a war dance, analogous to the one in the preceding sequence. The priest takes the feathers from the chicken that had been placed on the altar plate and inserts them in the layman's turban. He takes the copper pot and puts it (as he had previously done with the chicken) on the two shoulders and then the head of his client. Then, using the plant stems as a brush, he pours water on the layman's head. He takes the sword back and gives him the copper pot in its place. During all this time, the layman does a war dance. He shouts, tramples the ground, stamps his feet, turns in circles several times, encouraged by the cries of the onlookers. They say that the head of the house has recuperated his soul *(mukuma sam)* and that it is regenerated with its warlike qualities *(sir uthāunu)* (N). The layman takes the plate and pot of Nahangma, and puts them in the high part of the house. Nahangma's chicken is cut up in small pieces and will be served, fried or boiled, to all the onlookers when they eat the meal being prepared.

In the last sequence, the *phedangma* dismisses the *guru* who have helped in his journey. In one case I observed, he was at this time violently possessed.

Some concluding remarks concerning the ritual Nahangma

1. The ritual to Nahangma, performed solely by the *phedangma*, has the secondary function of recognizing a priest by showing him his way *(lam)*.

2. The *phedangma* can recognize any type of vocation: *phedangma*, of course, but also *bijuwā*, *yuma*, *ongshi*. The other priests do not have this privilege. They remain limited to the narrow framework of their categories. They act as specialists. A *bijuwā*, for example, is of no help in recognizing a future *yuma* or *phedangma*. He comes to officiate and then disappears in the face of his failure. Contrary to the *phedangma*, he can only recognize the vocation of a priest in his own category, that is, a *bijuwā*.

3. No matter how the vocation was divulged during the illness (trance or path) and regardless of the category of the priest officiating, it is finally the *phedangma* and the *phedangma* alone who reveals this vocation. He does it each time he officiates at the Nahangma in his client's house. He therefore becomes the spokesman for the community who recognizes the future priest.

Apprenticeship

Once his 'way' is known, the future priest chooses a master whose teaching he will follow. This master must be a priest from

the category to which the disciple is seen to belong: *phedangma* for a *phedangma*, *bijuwā* for a *bijuwā*, etc. ... The terms designating the master and student are borrowed from Nepāli *(guru, chela)*.

Often the master chosen is the one who took care of the disciple, during his illness, and who recognized his vocation. This is the case of the *bijuwā*, Late and Lungnasa; the *yuma*, Kapoba, Moktama, etc. ...

The choice is accomplished by a small ceremony. In a winnowing basket placed before his master, the disciple puts a buffalo head, two bottles of *raksi* (spirits), some money. This prestation is called *yajen*, the prize. He bows with respect, and phrases his request in traditional terms. If the master accepts the prestation, he commits himself to teach the *mundhum* to his student and give him his religious gear. This ceremony resembles certair kinship prestations.

The duration of the apprenticeship theoretically varies depending on whether it is a question of a *phedangma*, on the one hand, or a *yuma* or *bijuwā* on the other. For the former, the duration seems rather indeterminate. The latter must theoretically stay with their masters for three years.

Priests who have had violent contact with the supernatural (retreat to the forest, possession) are reputed to have learned the *mundhum* directly from their master-spirits. In their case, the instruction is said to last a short time (from four months to two years). Some 'have not even needed to submit to an apprenticeship'. This is said to be the case of the *yuma* of Mahapangphe, from the Wanem clan, living in Songsabung in the Maewa and reportedly able to 'fly in the air'. The priests who know the *mundhum* without having learned it are called *pok ya*, *pok yuma*, *pok samba*.

Actually the duration of the apprenticeship appears rather long. It lasted three years for the *bijuwā* of Tempe, and the *yuma* of Tjungjipung, but these cases seem rare. Kapoba, reputed to be the best *yuma* in the three valleys, studied for eight or nine years with his mother's brother. *Bijuwā* Lungwaba's master left for Assam after teaching for four years, but this apprenticeship was said to be incomplete. The *phedangma* Kule began his apprenticeship at 24 and finished at 31. It is said that *phedangma* Muktuba's apprenticeship lasted nine years.

The association between the master and disciple seeems different, depending on whether it is a question of *phedangma* on the one hand, or *yuma* and *bijuwā* on the other.

Yuma and *bijuwā* have only one master. During the entire apprenticeship they must submit to rigorous taboos. They may not

participate in youth dances. They must remain chaste. A woman may only begin her apprenticeship six months after a birth. The *yuma*, it is said, must purify himself every day in the river. He eats only once a day. He may not speak with members of other *jāt* (populations, castes). Morning and night he must offer incense to Yuma. It is only after initiation that these taboos are removed.

The taboos applied to the *phedangma* seem much less rigorous. The majority of these priests have several masters, one after the other. Muktuba had 8 or 10, in his own family as well as outside. Kule had nine belonging to three different villages.

For *phedangma* and *bijuwā* recruited from the Limbu community, there are no language problems, at least in the Mewa Khola. On the other hand, a Newar priest of Yuma, living in Dobhan, recites the *mundhum* in Limbu.

The method of teaching seems the same for all the categories of priests. It is based on repetition. The disciple follows his master when the latter officiates. He places himself next to him and immediately repeats each of the couplets of the *mundhum*. He follows him in all the ritual gestures. This process if called *sanglangoba*.

Aside from this formal consideration, the *yuma* and *bijuwā* learn to control the trance in a way I do not understand. The end of the apprenticeship is accompanied by a total cure. Likewise the asocial conduct of the priests disappears. Modemba discussed the *phedangma* Largang of Chinasung as being taciturn, sombre, violent; 'after his teaching, he became a pleasant man'.

It is said that there is a gradation in the teaching. For example, a *phedangma* would just learn to offer incense to Yuma; then to propitiate the masters of nature; then call the patient's soul; then sacrifice the pig; then the ritual of Nahangma; then Lumaeppa; then Langṣing.

It is at the end of the apprenticeship that the master would give his disciple the gear he will later use.

The bijuwā's Gear[9]

The gear in general is called *sama* in Limbu. It is used by the *bijuwā* when he dances around the *yaguesing* pole. The gear is composed of the following elements:

1. A headdress called *wasang* is made of a circular support with circular sections analogous to a crown. The materials consist of a straw pad, covered with cloth on which cowrie shells *(baga)*

are sewn. In this support they insert porcupine quills *(oiḅuk)* and feathers in six distinct groups. The predominant feathers are those of the *wado* bird, perhaps the *Gracula religiosa* (Chemjong 1961:272; Turner 1931:519). In the various headdresses I observed there were also feathers from the cock *(wa)*, the *samdang wa (dãphe* in Nepāli: the *Lophophorus impejanus*) the red-footed partridge called *khewa* in Limbu and *cyākhuro* in Nepāli, the peacock, called *mera* in Limbu, and *mujūr* in Nepāli, a migratory bird called *karangewa* in Limbu, the buzzard (*muya* in Limbu), the Himalayan pheasant called *tikwa* in Limbu and *kālij* in Nepāli, and a long-tailed bird (called *mekempu* in Limbu), unidentified but said to live mainly in *yangsingba* trees *(Schima Wallichii)* and associated with the cult of *ai tābare*. Attached to this headdress and hanging down the back of the *bijuwā* is a long braid made of a band of black cloth with a red pompom at the end *(ya burko)*.

2. A white shirt called *ya boto* or *ya logek* is also worn.

3. A long pleated robe called *ya jama* is held at the waist by a strip of cotton passed through a hem-like belt. It is usually white and pleated and decorated with two wide red horizontal bands, one at the level of the thighs, the other at the calves.

4. A wide belt of red cotton *(ya-pho-i)* is worn around the waist. One end falls along the front of the robe down to the feet.

5. A leather waist belt must be made, they say, from the skin of a tiger *(keba)*, a bear *(makyu)* or a buck *(mirga)* (N). In reality, it is most often an old army waist belt. On the leather is sewn a continuous row of hand bells and small globular bells, of brass or bronze. Other bells hang all along the belt attached to small leather strips. These bells are called *pongue* in Limbu. The globular bells *(siri pongue)* are distinguished from the hand bells *(yang pongue, khiring pongue)*. Some come from the harness of a yak or Tibetan mule. Others are the hand bells used by the *lāmā*. The globular bells are decorated with embossed designs, evoking the heads of Mahākāla or the Buddhist knot. Formerly they were made by the Tibetans. Today, they may be made by the Newar of Bhojpur. Some come from Assam. The belt and globular bells are called *pongue sama*.

6. Around his neck the *bijuwā* wears various necklaces called *pomāi*. Some are made of seeds from the *pimbrikpa* tree. These are the famous *riṭṭhe mālā* of the *jhãkri*. Others are *rudrākṣa mālā*. Others, *osek pomai*, are made of snake vertebrae. They supposedly drive away the *bokso, boksi*.

7. Two other necklaces are worn as bandoliers, one on the left, the other on the right. They are called *āplāk*. They are made, for the most part of seeds, but also have either bird heads of the entire wing from the *samdangwa* mentioned above.

8. Also worn as bandoliers on the right and left, are two sacks called *ya jabo*, decorated with cowries in the form of two intertwining crosses; with tiger's teeth *(keba)*, wild-hog tusks *(sara)* and various bird feathers.

9. The *bijuwā* plays only the gong. It is a copper Nepāli plate *(thāl)* called *cethya* by the Limbu. The gong is beaten with a short, flat, rectangular baton called *ya krang sing* or simply *cethya hipma sing*, 'the wood to beat a gong'. When he dances the *bijuwā* is barefoot. To beat a gong is called *theng theng mungma*.

The gear is stored in a tightly woven bamboo basket with a lid. This basket is called a *lumphu*. The feathers, once detached from their support, are placed in a type of bamboo quiver, called a *wa-jau*.

It is considered dangerous for a layman to touch the *bijuwā*'s gear. If he wears any pieces of the *bijuwā*'s outfit, wounds form at the point of contact. The gear is individualized.

The yuma's Gear

The *yuma*'s gear resembles that of the *bijuwā*. The robe, the cloth belt, the leather belt with hand bells and globular bells, the various necklaces, and the little sacks are all identical to those of the *bijuwā*. There are however three important differences: first, the headdress consists of a red cloth turban, one end of which falls along the priest's back. Around the turban is a small necklace of *pimbrilapa* seeds. There are no feathers. It may be decorated with flowers or sometimes gold jewels. Secondly, the *yuma*'s instrument is never the gong but mainly the *jhākri*'s drum, the *ḍhyāṅgro*. It is made specially for him (mainly of *koirālo* wood and *mirga* skin), and is analogous to the *jhākri*'s drum. Enclosed inside are seven grains of rice, seven 'lightning stones', three kinds of incense and a copper coin. The drum is consecrated at a ritual during which a chicken is sacrificed. The drum, as well as the rest of the gear, is personal. In the case that it changes owners, a chicken must be sacrificed to prevent a possible risk of sickness or death. The baton is identical to that used by the *jhākri* and is also called a *gajo*. A trident, the sun and moon are painted on the skins. Thirdly, all accessories evoking the bird are absent from the *yuma*'s gear, which has neither feathers nor wings.

The *yuma*'s gear also includes the following:

1. Necklaces of flowers are worn at the neck.

2. A small sickle is inserted in the belt. It supposedly is the sickle Yuma uses to gather the harvest. It protects against *ajajaba (rākṣas)* (N).

3. A *ḍamaru* (N) (drum) is played with his left hand.

4. Small cymbals *(jhyāṃṭo)* (N) are also frequently used.

5. A bell, a bone horn, and a dagger *(thurmi)* analogous to the *phedangma*'s are included in the inventory.

6. A yak's tail is included.

7. Various spears and swords to which red cloth streamers are attached complete his outfit.

The phedangma's gear

The *phedangma*'s gear includes neither robes, nor belts with bells, nor sacks. In certain cases he officiates with nothing on his head. In other cases he has a turban or at least a Nepali hat. It is said that in the past, the *phedangma* had a characteristic headdress.

In fact his entire gear is contained in a small satchel. We have already discussed certain pieces in the description of the Nahangma ritual. These are mainly lightning stones *(seri lung)*, rock crystal *(pati lung)*, the bell *(pongue)*, the *ḍamaru* used sometimes with the bell, and the wooden *thurmi* dagger, made of *dhupi* (N) wood, with a three-sided blade, each section having the figure of a Nāga. The top of the dagger is decorated with three crude, embossed heads that evoke Brahma, Vishṇu, Mahādeo and represent Ningwa Phumba for the Limbu. A *garud* bird decorates the end of the handle.

The *phedangma*'s gear also may include a 'tiger-bone' horn, various animal horns, a large cowrie shell which serves in certain cases as a refuge for the *phedangma*'s soul, necklaces analogous to those of the *bijwā (pomai)*, porcupine quills *(oi buk)*, and finally, feathers of the *Gracula religiosa (wado buk)*.

The initiation of a priestess of Yuma[11]

I attended the initiation of a priestess of Yuma in the Mewa Khola. The ceremony took place in the latter's own house and in the neighbouring fields. The main participants were the priestess, her master and a *phedangma*. To designate such a ritual, the Limbu often use the Nepali word *vaṁsāvali* (succession of generations). This name evokes the way Yuma since the beginning has continued to endure and manifest himself. Less frequently, the Limbu expression *yama-dingma sing* is used. Approximately 60 people were present: neighbours from the hamlet, relatives from other villages, 'followers' of the master *yuma* and of the *phed-*

angma. Today this ceremony is becoming more and more rare. It necessitates very heavy expenses from the initiate's household. A buffalo, two sheep, three hogs, several goats, pigeons, more than 20 chickens, fish, honey, several dozen eggs and numerous pieces of fruit. In order to feed 60 people, rice, spirits and beer are additional expenses. The rituals last three days. We will summarize the sequence of events. Two series of ceremonies take place at the same time but they remain clearly separate, in different places, and only come together for a moment toward the middle of the second day. These are the rites conducted by the *phedangma* and the rites conducted by the two priests of Yuma, the master and his disciple. The most important ritual sequences occur at the altar of Yuma set up in the initiate's house and at the 'monumental' altar of Yuma, constructed temporarily in a terraced field near the residence. Other places are used for secondary rituals and appear in the account below.

Toward the middle of the first day, the *phedangma* begins to perform a number of ceremonies in the fields near the house. In one ceremony he blocks the path of the buzzard and wild cat, the master-spirits of the *bijuwā*, who might be attracted by the blood of the sacrifices. He offers them an egg after having accompanied them to their mythical residence. In another ceremony he offers 'some food scraps' to *saba sam*, the spirit of the monkey, so that he also will not come to interrupt the feast. In still another ritual, for the same reason, he offers two eggs to Mangsa, a particularly aggressive deity of the retinue of Tampungma. Finally, at nightfall there is a sacrifice for Singlaba. This is a 'Tibetan divinity *(mang)* who lives in a temple *(mandir)* (N) in Bhotia land'. An elaborate altar is set up in a terraced field. Offerings are made of butter, salt, fish, cooked rice and especially a small male goat whose head is cut off with a sabre. This ceremony, the most important one performed by the *phedangma* that evening, is comparable to the offering of the pig to Kemba. After the sacrifice, the altar is destroyed.

Toward four in the afternoon, Yuma's disciple leaves her house, preceded by a woman carrying an oil lamp and other offerings in a plate. She is followed by three people who carry the welcoming prestations for her master. The disciple plays the drum. Her cortege moves towards the master's path. The master's cortege, arriving from the village, is composed of a man carrying a raised sword leading the march followed by a man with a spear decorated in red and white, the colours of Yuma. Then follow seven children, boys and girls together, each carrying a copper plate containing a lighted butter lamp and one of the master's attributes (*thurmi*, conch, etc. ...). In the procession there is a man with a yak's tail and a small drum, on the order of a *ḍamaru*, which he plays. Then comes the priest of Yuma, playing his drum followed by various bearers who close the march.

The two corteges meet about 1000 feet from the disciple's house. They stop, facing each other on the road. Between them, in a winnowing basket placed on the ground, are the welcoming prestations that the disciple gives her master. These include flower necklaces, *raksi*, ginger, a small sum of money, and the like. The two priests dance and play the drum while the prestations are made.

The two corteges, that now form only one, walk in single file to the disciple's house. They stop at various places where they dance and play the drum. First they stop at the spring *(dhāra)* (N) and then in the inner courtyard of the house before the central pole which has been freshly cut and decorated. At each of the exterior corners of the house they stop, moving counterclockwise, beginning at the 'upper side' (ridge side). Finally they arrive at the threshold of the main door where they again stop. Then once inside, they circle, near the central pillar, and finally they arrive near the hearth.

The *yuma* and their corteges arrive at the permanent altar erected at the back of the living room and separated from it by a thin bamboo screen. They adorn the altar with the various objects they were carrying. This altar leans against the wall on the upper side *(tho)* of the house. It is a kind of shelf case with three boards whose angular top looks like the roof of a house. On each shelf are plates, butter lamps, pots full of water with flowers and leaves, and various offerings. In front of the altar is a trident planted in the ground. The priest's attributes are placed either on the packed earth or in the plates. They include a conch, *thurmi*, *ḍamaru*, cymbals, bone horn, diverse bells, yak's tail, drums, as well as other offerings of fruits, flowers, *achetā*, and incense.

After putting on all his gear, the master begins reciting the first '*mandhum* to Yuma'. One after the other, he will play each of the instruments in a solo. First he plays the cymbals and then the drum. Then he plays the drum and cymbals together. Finally, he again plays the drum alone. For most of the ceremony, the disciple will accompany her master with the cymbals, then toward the end of the ritual, with the drum. The two priests sit cross-legged facing the altar in the lower part of the house *(yo)*. While he plays the drum, the master chants the myth of Yuma. The disciple repeats each couplet after him as soon as he has finished *(sanglangoba)* (L). Toward the end of the ritual, the master directs the possession of his disciple, while she takes her drum and dances in a trance before the altar.

This first ritual to Yuma ends about six in the evening. The meal is then served by the members of the family, first to the priests, and then to all the guests.

In the morning of the second day, each of the three priests is purified at the *dhāra*. The most important ritual sequences take place in the afternoon of the second day. The *phedangma* and the priests of Yuma officiate in concert before the 'monumental' altar of Yuma, erected in the fields for the main animal sacrifices to Yuma and the members of her retinue (Kapoba, Kanorma, Modemsa and Kemsa). Between eight and eleven o'clock at night, the disciple, possessed and in a trance, performs her first divination (sign of her initiation).

From 6.00 in the morning the *phedangma* performs a series of rituals at various places in the terraced fields surrounding the initiate's house. Toward noon, he is in front of the monumental altar of Yuma. The first ritual is to the Naga, near the spring *(dhāra)*. The altar is placed on a board that spans a thin trickle of water. The Nāga are represented by clay spirals. The ritual is recited in Nepāli, and eggs are offered. The second is called *sagune*, an auspicious Nepāli ritual. An altar is set in a winnowing box and composed essentially of 16 small *samsing* leaves placed side by side. It takes place in a terraced field. This is followed by offerings to Kalika and Sigha Devi at the foot of a tree near the house. The tree is decorated with cotton threads interlaced with red and white streamers. Two altars in the hollow of a root at the base of the trunk. A pigeon is sacrificed to Kalika and an egg to Sigha.

Then offerings are made to the Sansāri, divinities of the universe, responsible for epidemics. These are conducted in Nepāli in a terraced field. Seven small altars, each built around an upright stone, are erected, and seven eggs are offered along with flowers and other items. Offerings are also made to Kāli Mar, responsible for smallpox, and to Cokhoba, associated with ritual purity. These are also made in Nepāli. The altar is set up around a small central pole at the base of which are two stones. Offerings of two pigeons (to Kāli Mar) and a white chicken (to Cokhoba) are made, as well as various sweets.

Then, offerings of two pigeons and various sweets are made to the divinities of the mountains, Pāthi Bhara and Mati Bhara. An egg is offered to Toksong Sikāri, who is always propitiated whenever sacrifices are made to the first two divinities. Then a ritual is conducted in Nepāli to Aitabāre, followed by an offering to personified rivers - Tamur Rājā/Rāni, Mewa Rājā/Rāni, Maewa Rājā/Rāni, and the 'sorceress' Chala Ḍākini. In a field, an altar composed of two stones and two poles (plant stalks) for each of the deities is erected and offerings of chickens are made to the river divinities while an egg is given to the latter one. These offerings are followed by a ritual to Misek, the spark, born of the jealousy of the sun and moon. Misek is given a rooster and the ritual is conducted in Limbu which is longer than those in Nepāli. The sacrifice of a chicken is made to Warokma,

the spirit of the waters followed by the sacrifice of four chickens to Tampunga, Taksongba, Koccoma, Shengma, 'masters of the forest'.

Next a ritualized curse is made in Limbu at an altar set up around a pole near the altar of the 'masters of nature'. Tied to the officiating priest is a cotton thread that is cut and an offering of a bottle of spirits is made.

Next, Dung Dunguey, divinity of the mountain, associated with the Syamba clan is worshipped in a field, in Limbu at an altar arranged around a pole. Offerings of a fat male chicken and beer are made. Then a very elaborate pole and altar are constructed in the courtyard of the house on the side of the river. This is the altar of Nahen. A fat male chicken is offered. (The rituals to Nahen are of several types; it is the ritual called Nahen *khoma* that is performed here). After the ritual to Nahen, rituals called *grāha* are conducted to drive away the evil influence of various constellations. These are very elaborate, accompanied by a long ritual associated with Tongsing, and are conducted around a central pole in the courtyard of the house, in the Limbu language.

At the time of each of these above mentioned rituals, the *phedangma* is assisted by two or three people who prepare the altars, who are present at the recital of the *mundhum*, and who perform the live sacrifices.

During this time, about 10 people work on the construction of the monumental altars to Yuma and the members of his retinue. They have been working since early in the morning in a terraced field below the house. The main material is bamboo. The altar dedicated to Yuma is similar in structure to the altar of shelves erected inside of the house. It has three shelves above which is a canopy of red and white cloth representing the 'sky' *(tanpang)*. Through the centre of the canopy is a sort of circular chimney of red cloth that represents the 'bridge' linking the sky and the earth *(torong ding tangsang)*. Scattered around this first monumental altar made of upright bamboos are smaller altars erected to Kapoba, Kantima, Modemsa, Thungdangba, the divinities of Yuma's retinue. A little farther away is another group of similar but smaller altars dedicated mainly to Kemba and Payunglung and also to Kebo.

The *phedangma* then sacrifices a hog and several other animals to Kemsa and the divinities of his retinue. He then comes before the monumental altar to Yuma. Following his particular method (which is different from that of the Yuma priests), he gets ready to sacrifice animals to Yuma. It is then that the priest of Yuma and his disciple come to join him.

From morning until about noon, while the *phedangma* performed the rituals we have just listed, the priests of Yuma (the master and his disciple) perform a second '*mundhum* to Yuma', identical to the one performed the preceding evening, but inside the house in front of the shelf-like altar.

Toward noon, the two priests of Yuma go outside the house. They play the drum and dance. They are preceded by the cortege described above. They stop at several points: the fireplace, the central pillar, the threshold of the main door; then outside, at the four corners of the house before which they pass. Arriving again at the inner courtyard, they dance and play the drum around the central pole. Still preceded by their cortege, they move in a single file to the monumental altar of Yuma situated in the fields where the *phedangma* waits for them.

While the *phedangma* begins the ritual to Yuma, the master and his disciple move counter-clockwise around the altar, dancing and playing the drum. They are preceded by the cortege, and followed by the guests. Then they sit cross-legged facing the altar next to the *phedangma*, who continues to officiate. All their gear, carried by the members of the cortege, is placed before the altar. They begin their third '*mundhum* to Yuma'.

The *phedangma* then begins to direct the most important animal sacrifices to Yuma, Kapoba, Kausima, Modemba, Thungdanga: a buffalo, two sheep, two goats, and others. These sacrifices are conducted according to three distinct traditional sequences, interspersed with pauses (and analogous to the sacrifice of the hog to Kemba). The two priests of Yuma act in concert with the *phedangma*, reciting the ritual, playing the drum and dancing at certain times.

Toward five in the evening, the animals, which had been slaughtered, eviscerated and placed on a mat between the priests and the altar, are brought to the house in baskets. The priests of Yuma return to the house, preceded by their corteges, accompanied by the *phedangma* and followed by the onlookers who join in the dancing. They stop at the same points as they did upon their arrival (but, of course, in reverse order). They return to the altar inside the house for the evening ceremony.

Inside the house the *phedangma* performs the rituals to the household gods including Okwanama. The *yuma* once again take their places before the altar and begin the fourth '*mundhum* to Yuma'. The master directs the ritual and guides the disciple's possession. Once the disciple is possessed, she leaves the altar, dismisses her 'master spirits', and removes her gear. From this time on, the disciple officiates alone before the altar. Possessed and in a trance, she dances and plays the drum. A master of ceremonies prepares the divination séance. Each guest who wants to part-

icipate, receives a small saucer of plant leaves in which he places a flower and a small coin (1 rupee). He returns his saucer to the master of ceremonies and indicates the questions he wants to ask Yuma. The master of ceremonies approaches the disciple who is in a trance and calls to her by the name Yuma Mahārāni. He shows her the saucer, names the person who made the offering, and asks the questions. The possessed priestess answers each question. The guests are at this time assembled near the altar and listen attentively. According to the spectators, this is the most important moment of the ceremony. This is the first time that the new priestess predicts the future. Her 'professional future' is in a way at stake. In the case of a well-known *yuma* of the Tambar Khola, people still remembered, after 20 years, the divinations he had made the day of his initiation. These debuts determine his reputation.

The following are some of the predictions that were made: To a villager from Lingtap, he predicted the death of his wife. Not only did the wife die within three months but the women he later married also died. He predicted the death of a 15-year-old boy who lived in his own village (Mahapanghe). The prediction materialized within two weeks.

Between 9.30 and 11 p.m. about 30 people take turns listening to Yuma speak through the mouth of his new priestess. At the end of this fourth *mundhum* to Yuma, the hosts offer a meal to the three priests and all the guests.

On the third day, a fifth *mundhum* to Yuma is performed in the house. It is identical to that of the previous evening. Once the disciple has gone into a trance, the master leaves the altar and lets her prophesy for the people who were unable to obtain this favour the previous evening. Toward midnight this fifth *mundhum* ends. Around 1.00 a.m., a final ritual is performed inside the house. The master receives the prestations from his disciple and the payment for his services (money, an enormous basket of meat, and other goods). He then dismisses his disciple. At this time he predicts her future and gives her some last advice while the *phedangma* receives the prestations for his participation in the ceremonies (money, meat).

The ceremony lasts a half hour. It takes place near the central pillar of the house. The *phedangma* and master Yuma are side by side. The disciple faces them. The members of her family and the cortege, ready to leave, are lined up next to them.

In the same way he had arrived, preceded by his cortege and playing the drum, the priest of Yuma returns to his village, accompanied by the *phedangma*. Leaving the initiate's house, he is accompanied by his disciple, who leaves him at the same place she had come to greet him, three days earlier.

Initiation of the bijuwā and phedangma

I have little information on the initiation of the *bijuwā* and *phedangma*. The initiation of a *bijuwā* is designated by the same name as that of the *yuma*, *ya dengma sing*. Like the *yuma*'s initiation, it takes place at the end of the 'low season', in winter, between October and February.

As with the *yuma*, the disciple will greet his master on the road. In a winnowing box, he places 30 rupees, spirits and meat. In exchange his master gives him his gear.

A monumental altar is constructed with bamboo. 'On top, there is a solid platform. A ladder with eight rungs leads to it. Once the buffalo is sacrificed, the *bijuwā*, in a trance, bites the animal on the ears, muzzle, feet and tail. Then he climbs the ladder toward the platform. Once at the top, he dances. The guests dance with him. It is said that on the platform the *bijuwā* has arrived at the village of his 'master-spirits', *yepme thungema pangphe*. During this time, the *phedangma* performs the Grāhā, Tonsing, and other rituals. A *bijuwā* who does not perform this ceremony will never be a true *bijuwā*. And Muktuba, the *phedangma*, who is today 48, adds: 'My father's sister, who was a *bijuwāni*, performed this ceremony when I was seven'. As with the *yuma*, there is a main divination ceremony. The *bijuwā*, in order to prophesy, turns his plate (gong) in circles around him. At the end, the master dismisses his disciple. 'Now you no longer need me. You can do the *mundhum* alone.'

The initiation of a *phedangma* is called a *phedang thok lung*. The word *thok*, from *thokma*, means sprinkling, and by extension, ordination. It takes place in the inner courtyard of the house, around the central pole called *samba guesing*.

'Today, the *phedangma* initiations are not done as they were in the past,' says Medemsa, an old man of the village. 'Tongsing is done, a chicken is sacrificed to Nahangma and it's over. But before, the initiation of a *phedangma* was as important as that of the *bijuwā* and *yuma*. You had to kill hogs, goats and as many animals as for the *bijuwā*. All that is forgotten.'

Conclusion

I do not intend to conclude. My material is fragmentary and I have not attempted to interpret it. It raises more questions than it answers and is the basis for further inquiry.

I would, however, like to make two remarks. Many of Professor Hitchcock's (1967:156) observations concerning the comparison of Central Asiatic shamanism and Nepali shamanism apply to the Limbu

religion. However, as for the 'journey of the soul', it would appear that the facts concerning the Limbu of the Mewa sometimes differ from those observed among the Magar of the Bhuji valley. And yet, the Limbu religion, like the Magar cults, bears the mark of an obvious deterioration of the Central Asiatic tradition.

Secondly, one of the outstanding points concerning the vocation of the Limbu priests seems to be the characteristic role of the *phedangma*. He has a particular function in the recognition of this vocation. He is present at the initiation of other priests. The Yuma cult, for example, considered separately, could eventually be the object of a comparison with the facts observed by Gaborieau (1969), Macdonald (1962) and Höfer (1973) in other Nepali regions. But it cannot be approached as an isolated phenomenon. The functions of the *phedangma* are significant in this regard. The Limbu religion must be studied as a whole in accordance with the point of view defined in a recent contribution by Höfer (1974: 66-67).

Philippe Sagant

1. Concerning the Limbu of eastern Nepal, see, among others, Caplan (1970) for data on economy and social change, Hooker (1854) for regional geography and other ethnographic data in the 19th century, Chemjong (1967) for aspects of social and cultural life, and Jones (in this volume) on religion. In this article the geographical names have not been changed, but the names of people have been altered. The Nepāli terms were transcribed according to Turner (1931). Limbu terms have been gallicized and reference is made to Chemjong's dictionary (1961). On the types of agriculture in the Mewa Khola area, see Sagant (1973a).

2. These two visits were financed by the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (Paris) within the framework of the R.C.P. Nepal. I wish to thank Professor Millot of the R.C.P. for his constant aid.

3. Concerning the role of the *phedangma* at the time of a marriage, see Sagant (1970:91). On the various types of priests, see R. Jones (in this volume). For a bibliography concerning the *phedangma*, see Sagant (1969:121-22).

4. On the *baiddang*, cf. Macdonald (1966b:285); *baidde*, 'native doctor'.

5. *Artemisia vulgaris*; for example, Siiger (1967:61, Vol. 1).

6. *Shi-ya*, see Chemjong 1961:294 *(sik samba)*.

7. The cult of the Yuma and its priests seems to be localized in the north of Limbu country. On this subject see R. Jones and S. Kurz Jones in this volume.

8. Concerning the myth of Nahangma, see Chemjong (1967:37-40, Part I) and also Chemjong (1967:12, 14, 22, 58, 79).

9. Concerning the gear of the Limbu religious practitioners, see R. Jones in this volume. For a comparison with the *jhãkri*, see Hitchcock, Michl and Macdonald in this volume.

10. On the initiation and apprenticeship, see also R. Jones and S. Kurz Jones in this volume.

Limbu *yuma* (master and disciple) beating their drums during the initiation ceremony

VI

A PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE PUIMBO AND THE NGIAMI - THE SUNUWAR SHAMANS OF SABRA

The Sunuwar constitute a small agro-pastoral population of Nepal. They live in East No. 2 and No. 3 districts between the Tamba and Mauling rivers.[1] According to R. Shafer (1966:3) they are linguistically classified in the 'Bodic Division, East Himalayish Section, Western Branch, Bahing Unit' of the Sino-Tibetan languages.

The village of Sabra, where my investigation took place in 1969-70, is located on the Sabra Khola, a tributary of the Likhu Khola. The village is composed of diverse homesteads and hamlets. I lived in Khaping, a hamlet consisting of 42 dwellings occupied by the Sunuwar.

Introduction

The *puimbo* (S) or *ngiami* (S) are the shamans of the Sunuwar community and serve as privileged intermediaries between the world of spirits and the profane world of the villagers. It is said that the first *puimbo* of Sabra was Gandar, forefather of Samarbahadur, who is presently the *puimbo* of Khaping. It is Gandar who is invoked as the great ancestor at the time of the Sunuwar public rituals, such as Tsandi (S), Ghil (S) or Khas (S).[2]

The *puimbo* or *ngiami* are 'beings who fall into a state of trance during which time voices speak through their person'.[3] In so far as they communicate with the world of spirits, they know the past, present and future, they can find lost or misplaced objects, discern the causes of evils inflicted by an angry spirit and then exorcise them. After I have described the shaman's calling and the sources and attributes of his power, I will limit myself, in this article, to the purely shamanic aspect of the *puimbo* and to his role as a healer, after a brief description of his calling and the sources of his power and attributes.

At present, there are only three *puimbo* and *ngiami* in Sabra: a *puimbo* in Khapin, a *puimbo* in Kerabhote, another in Nigale and a *ngiami* in Bessarabi. Khargabahadur Sunuwar who is also a *puimbo* from Khaping is presently serving in the army in India.

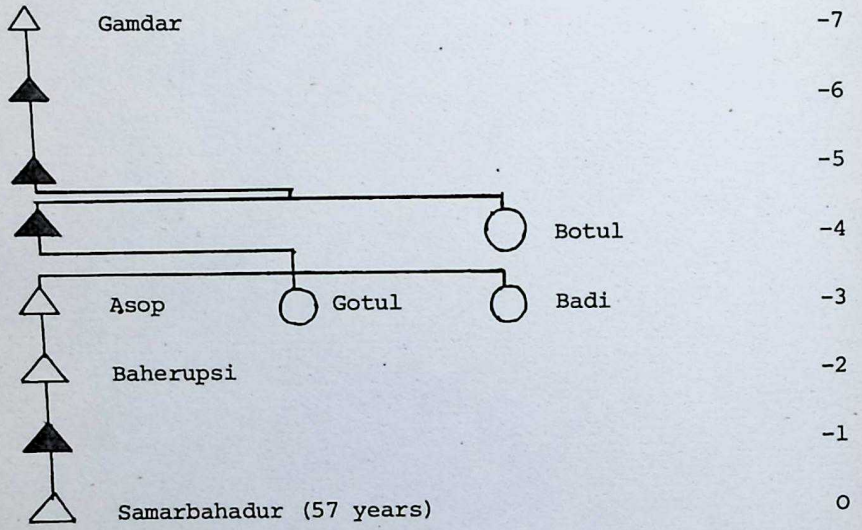
A Sunuwar shaman during a séance

The Calling and Apprenticeship of the Puimbo or Ngiami

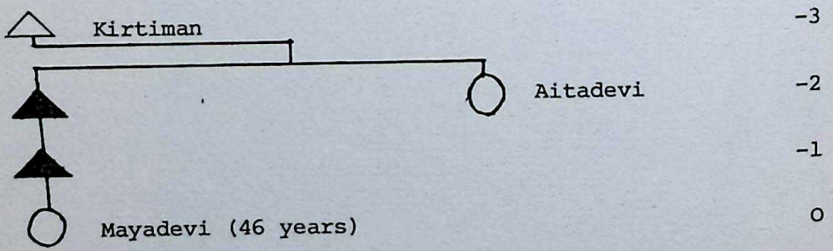
The calling of a *puimbo* and *ngiami* often seems to make itself known during an encounter with a spirit who undertakes to initiate them. According to my informants, these experiences have always taken place in this way, and it is these experiences that I will try to relate here.

Fig. 1

Lineage of Samarbahadur, *puimbo* of Khaping



Lineage of Mayadevi, *ngiami* of Bessarabi



△ : has been a *puimbo*

▲ : has never been a *puimbo* ○ : has been a *ngiami*

Samarbahadur is the descendant of Gamdar who was the first *puimbo*. He is 57, lives in Khaping and has been married three times. When he was 13 or 14, Samarbahadur was sent by his father to the hilliest regions of the jungle in order to tend the livestock grazing there. One day, when he had penetrated deeply into the jungle, he lost his way and came upon some small elf-like beings who led him into a grotto. The male elves are called *bashpuimbo* (forest spirits) (S)[4] and the females are called *shalapuimbo* (long-haired spirits) (S).[5] There in the grotto, one of these elves taught him diverse formulae *(mantra)* (N) and invited him to return. Samarbahadur then lost consciousness and was found three days later by his parents and neighbours who, being worried, had organized a search party to find him. Since he had a high fever, his father called upon Bakshi *puimbo*, the most competent *puimbo* of Sabra, to take care of him. After he was cured by Bakshi, Samarbahadur was asked to describe what had happened to him. He said he had walked in the jungle until he met the elves who looked after him. Bakshi asked if he had touched one of these elf-women, but the young boy replied that he had been very careful not to come into direct physical contact with them. These elf-women are in fact able to reduce the power *(tung)* (S) of a future *puimbo* if he so much as touches them or has sexual contact with one of them. Samarbahadur's hair began to grow and his father, consternated by this sign of a future shaman, asked Bakshi to take him as a student. Bakshi accepted but, being very authoritarian, often beat the new student. During his apprenticeship, Samarbahadur learned by heart formulae that would enable him to ward off and immobilize evil spirits; he learned to utilize diverse methods of attracing spirits and lastly, he was taught to follow the rituals of officiating *puimbo* at the time of the ceremonies. Several times a year, when Samarbahadur was overcome by a fit of trembling *(krinkri)* (S), he would leave his master and isolate himself in the forest where he again met with the *bashpuimbo*. When Samarbahadur was 16 or 17, his father held a feast in honour of Bakshi *puimbo* and offered him a jacket, a ritual garment *(jāmā)* (N)[6] 20 to 25 rupees and distilled liquor. Before the family, friends and neighbours, who had gathered for the occasion, Bakshi re-enacted the apprenticeship sessions; at the end of the night, he consecrated his novice who would henceforth have the right to use a shamanic drum *(ḍhyãgro)* (N).[7] Samarbahadur chose to leave Sabra in order to follow the teachings of other shamans. He studied with a Sunuwar *ngiami*, then with a Tamang *jhãkri*[8] before leaving for Darjeeling. In Darjeeling, where he worked as a porter, he met various shamans and thereby acquired more and more experience. It was not until the age of 26 that he considered himself a true *puimbo*. Meanwhile, he had enlisted in the Indian army as a Gurkha soldier. After having served for nine years, he stayed in the north of India where he wandered about in the company of *sādhu* and ascetics *(yogi)*. At the age of 35, he returned to Sabra. The few *yogi* who today travel through this region, seem to make a detour through Sabra in order to see him.

I have taken the time to describe Samarabahadur's training in detail because his personality without a doubt surpasses that of the average inhabitant of Sabra and consequently his case can help us explain the nature of possession among the *puimbo*.

The second example concerns the *puimbo* of Kerabhote, 49 years of age and married only once.

When he was 7 or 8, the *puimbo* Kerabhote fell into a swoon at a crossroads on a wooded hilltop. He was smitten with a high fever, accompanied by nausea and delirium and mumbled in an unknown language. His body began to swell although he was no longer able to take nourishment. A *puimbo* was called who immediately discovered that the child had been attacked by a spirit. Several sacrifices were made, but his health continued to decline. Bakshi *puimbo*, whose fame was widely known, was summoned. He came that very evening and spent the entire night beating his drum and reciting exorcism formulae. In the early hours of the morning, he exorcised the spirit Dobate Bhir ,[9] which had taken possession of the boy, and compelled it to leave the body in peace. The child regained his strength and subsequently followed the teachings of Bakshi *puimbo* and also of his paternal aunt, a well-known *ngiami* who taught him *mantra* of proven effectiveness.

Since the age of 17 or 18, he has been a *puimbo* and has never left the area. Because of his even temper and generosity, he is very popular among the Sunuwars, the Kagate and the Tamang of the Sabra and Bhuji area.

The third *puimbo* lives in Nigale. He is 52 and has been married twice.

When he was only 8 or 10, the *puimbo* of Nigale was knocked down by a *bashpuimbo* in the jungle and he remained there for several days. The elves taught him *mantra*. When he was found, he could remember nothing, but frequently had shivering spells and moaned. His parents were at a loss, since they did not want their son to become a *puimbo*. He refused to listen to them and often returned to the forest. For several days, he lived without food and with hardly any clothes in the company of the elves, and his master, who taught him how to make a drum. At the age of 15 or 16, he began to practise his art. He never performed the major public rituals of the Sunuwar, Tsandi, Ghil or Khas, and he never had a *puimbo* instructor. He is, however, frequently sought to cure certain ailments, such as paralysis, cessation of menstrual cycles, or miscarriages.

The last example is that of Mayadevi, a 47 year old *ngiami*, married, widowed and living in Bessarabi.

When she was 11 or 12, she went into the jungle to cut foliage for the livestock. She fell and fainted. She was discovered three or four days later shivering beneath a rock, eyes closed, unconscious and speaking in an unknown language. A *puimbo* called to her bedside identified the evil spirit. He advised the girl's parents that the spirit wanted their daughter to become a *ngiami*, and that if they prevented this, their daughter would die. She subsequently spent long periods of seclusion in the jungle where she again met with her helping spirit and periodically followed the teaching of various *puimbo* and *jhãkri*, including Bakshi *puimbo*. She complained that as a woman, she had too many domestic duties and that, unlike the male novices, she could not properly pursue her apprenticeship, as she was not as readily available as her male colleagues. (In fact, it is impossible to officiate when one is menstruating or when a woman under the same roof is menstruating.) Nevertheless, she is just as qualified as Samar-bahadur or the *puimbo* of Kerabhote and nothing prevents her from participating in a Khas, Ghil or even a Tsandi. In 1969 she had two shaman apprentices, a Tamang girl and a Chetri boy.

Upon reading these various experiences, it becomes evident that the *puimbo*'s or *ngiami*'s vocation is initiated in the forest, that is, in the evil world of wild beasts and hostile spirits. In this region, where adults are reluctant to enter, there are numerous stories of people being injured, devoured or lost in the jungle. Children go to live there for several days, without food in the company of elves and malevolent spirits. The villagers are certain that having successfully passed this test, the future *puimbo* is marked out and favoured by the awesome deities. They are all pleased by this, and in their contacts with the future *puimbo*, try to obtain certain significant favours, which will augur well for the future.

It is also apparent that the role of *puimbo* or *ngiami* cannot be hereditary, since each one is individually chosen by a spirit. In fact, a divinity rarely chooses outside a shaman's lineage, but he may bypass direct descendants and select distant relatives.

It is possible for both partners of a marriage to be possessed. I have heard of a case of a Sunuwar couple in Pirti where the husband was a *puimbo* and the wife a *ngiami*.

The Sources of Power

The *puimbo* or *ngiami* is aided in his duties by a helping spirit who appears at the time of the young shaman's calling and who delegates to the novice his powers *(tung)* (S). These protective spirits do not all have the same powers. There are four types of powers, each associated with a particular species of plant life:

- *Lawa tung.* This is the most important power. It is a type of bamboo.[10]

- *Dhali tung.* This is a *Fagaceae* whose foliage serves as fodder for buffalos.[11]

- *Gungirwa tung.* This is a thorny creeper that *puimbo* use to make the cubit stick *(kong-gu)* (S) with which they beat their drums *(ḍhyãgro)*.[12]

- *Kiabra tung.* This is the root of a *Liliaceae* which is used to make a soap.[13]

With the aid of *Lawa tung*, an embodiment of the rainbow *(washi)* (S), the most important spirit, a *puimbo* can confront the household spirit *(gu-muk-ki)* (S), the most dangerous of all spirits. The other *tung: Dhali*, *Gungirwa* and *Kiabra*, are much weaker and their powers are no longer sufficient to enable the *puimbo* or *ngiami* to exorcise the household spirit.

In accordance with this hierarchical order of powers obtained from the spirits, the *puimbo* or *ngiami* are also arranged in a hierarchy. Thus, a *Lawa tung puimbo* or *ngiami* says, speaking of a colleague: 'That one! Oh, he's a *Dhali tung*', with a scowl of disdain.

A puimbo's or ngiami's paraphernalia

When officiating, the *puimbo* is attired in certain clothes and uses certain equipment that, he says, protect him from the evil spells of spirits. He wears an ample long sleeved, double breasted garment *(jāmā)*, of white cotton, that falls around his ankles. It is gathered at the waist by a long girdle *(kipsuru)* (S) of white or coloured cotton or nettle fibre or ramie. Around his head, he ties a long piece of white cotton *(rutike)* (S) with one end falling over his right shoulder. Into this improvised turban he has inserted several porcupine quills *(kashie-taki)* (S). Slung across his back and hanging at his right side, he wears a pouch *(duntahilo)* (S) made of cotton woven by his wife. The pouch is decorated with one or several rows of cowries or sometimes with wild boars' teeth *(bashpo-krui)* (S) and trimmed with braids of coloured thread, usually yellow. He wears up to twenty necklaces *(mālā)* that resemble rosaries and are made of snake vertebrae *(rajmālā* (N) or *chebasarpa mālā)*,[14] and large black beads of *kalomālā* (N) *(Sapindus mukerossi* Gaertn.*)*, or brown beads of *rudracchemālā* (N) *(Elaeocarpus sphaericus* Gaertn.*)*. Certain *puimbo* or *ngiami* attach to these rosary-type necklaces the tusks of a wild boar or the claws of a bird of prey *(gadul)*.[15] He also wears bandoliers with various size bells, whose names are as follows: a) four large bells *(ghaṇṭā)* (N); *seringhi* (S) (the sky);

duma (S) (beneath the ground); *kompu* (S) (ridge pole/air); *gumon* (S) (Nepal/air); b) three small bells: *sidha* perhaps from *siddha* (N) (perfect); *polchi*, perhaps from *polnu* (N) (to burn); *toshare* perhaps from *tusāro* (N) (white frost); c) one tiny bell *(ghaṇṭi)*; *washi* (S) (rainbow); and d) nine small globular bells each of which is supposed to represent the spirits of the dead *(masān)* (N).[16] The names of these are: *bir* (brave, very powerful) *masān* (N); *kabir* (probably from Urdu, *kabar*, grave); *kholā* (stream) *masān* (N); *pākha* (dry terrace) *masān* (N); *himāl* (snow-covered mountain) *masān* (N); *bagāle* (prolific) *masān* (N); *dobāṭe* (cross-road) *masān* (N); *ekle* (solitary) *masān* (N). (According to various *puimbo* and *ngiami*, *bir* and *kabir masān* are benevolent spirits).

Often, in order to reinforce his power and to frighten evil spirits, the *puimbo* attaches a small copper disc *(thāl)* (N)[17] behind some of the bells in such a way that when he dances, the bells hit the metal disc. Around his neck and hanging at his chest, he wears a necklace *(kasaṅlo)*[18] made of rings or iron chain that the *puimbo* has stolen from a cemetry or a bridge. (The chains that support the suspension-bridges in Nepal have an unquestionable magico-religious quality in the eastern part of the country). One of the *puimbo* reluctantly admitted to me that he had taken his from the cemetery of Haluwa, near Betali, a town inhabited primarily by Brahmans. Mayadevi assured me that she got her *kasaṅlo* from her great-grandfather on her mother's side.

Around his wrists, he winds rosaries made of *kalolmālā*. In his wide belt *(kipsuru)* he keeps a small ritual knife, about one foot long, called a *phurbu*.[19] It is sculptured with various symbolic patterns that will be described and analyzed when we talk of the drum *(ḍhyāgro)* and its handle. The two are in fact similar. This ritual knife is made of *tsegi* (S)[20] or *thingre* (S)[21] wood. It is used for cutting certain *gtorma* (S)[22] at the time of the Tsagu, Khas or Ghil rituals. At the top of the handle *(purshi)* (S), it is decorated with the three heads of lamas and ribbons of red and white cloth. The *puimbo* uses these ribbons instead of a whip to either drive away or capture certain wandering souls or certain spirits. In the pouch that he wears at his side, there are two small sickles *(kurmi)* (S), each with a brass blade and a handle of wood *(toshil)* (S) *(Abies pindrow)*, and 'elf stones' *(bash puimbo polu)* (S), generally made of rock-crystal or petrified wood that had been given to him by a *bashpuimbo* during his novitiate in the jungle. Finally a small wooden thimble *(kamir/kemur)* (S) is placed in the pouch. He uses the thimble to pour a drop of water as an offering to the spirits. In the pouch are also placed one or two small child's femurs, taken from a cemetery on a moonless night. These femurs *(mirk)* (S) are sometimes those of a tiger *(dzaemirk)* (S),[23] which had been used as a riding animal by the *bashpuimbo*. The *puimbo* uses these femurs as small trumpets to call the forest spirits.[24] He may also summon spirits by blowing into a *brat* (S), or wild sheep's horn *(Cervus*

axis) or white conch (*sang*, (N), probably from Sanskrit) of various sizes.

In addition to the *phurbu*, the *puimbo* has another weapon with which to confront spirits - the lance *(tsiutek-bartsa)* (S). It is made of *tsotsi* (S) or *dhopi* (N)[25] wood, surmounted by an oblong spear-head, *(tsiuteke)* (S) from which red or white cloth ribbons *(dader)* (S)[26] hang. Eight to ten inches of this part of the lance, which the *puimbo* holds in his hand, are decorated with the same patterns as those found on the *phurbu* or the drum handle. This lance, approximately 4½ feet long, is rarely used by the *ngiami*. The *puimbo* has one or several pairs of cymbals *(jhyāta)* (S)[27] made of copper or brass, of various sizes, bought in Kathmandu from the Newar goldsmiths (Bare) or in Dharan from the metal-workers. Each of the two cymbals is sexed; the high-pitched one is masculine; the low-pitched one is feminine. Lastly, each *puimbo* possesses a drum *(ḍhyãgro)*.

The *ḍhyãgro* is a double-headed drum with a single handle. The frame is made of one piece of hazel wood *(tsegi)* or of *(thingre)*, c. 4 inches deep with a circumference of c. 16½ inches. The membrane covering each of the two sides is folded over on the outside. It is made of the skin of a three-year-old deer *(rokoshie)* (S), *(Cervudus muntjac)* or of a two-year-old goat *(kiarshe)* (S). A leather thong *(tanin)* (S), or a thong made of calamus *(guri)* (S), secures the skins by a network of interlaced knots. Between the wood of the frame and the thong, the *puimbo* slips one or more porcupine quills to prevent the skins from stretching. The handle *(goedaki)* (S), which is c. one foot long, is pegged to the frame. It is made of the same wood as the frame and sculptured with various symbolic patterns, usually in forms that are identical to those engraved on the *phurbu* or on the lance. It is important to note that the face of the Tsinge Lama is located below the feminine side of the *ḍhyãgro*. This is not the case with the other two *lāmā* faces, the two *tele*. (See Figure 2):

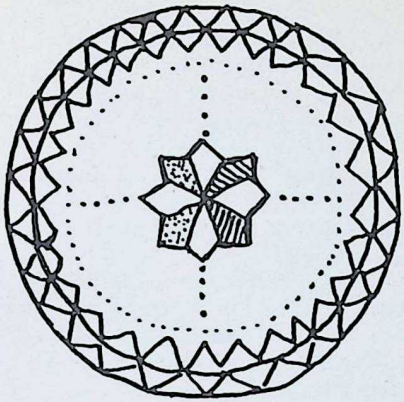
Unless otherwise noted words are assumed to be Sunwāri.

1. *pia:* the head. There are three human faces called *lāmā* (N). (A) Tsinge Lama; (B) Nima Tele; (C) Urgin Tele[28]

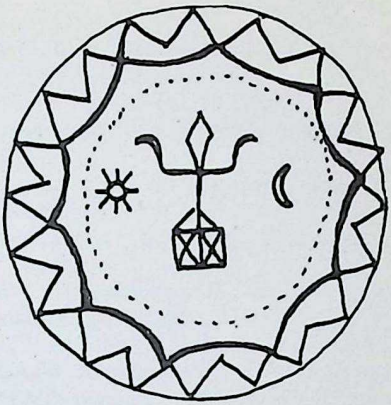
2. *batsa:* neck-opening, or handgrip.

3. *bala:* shoulders.

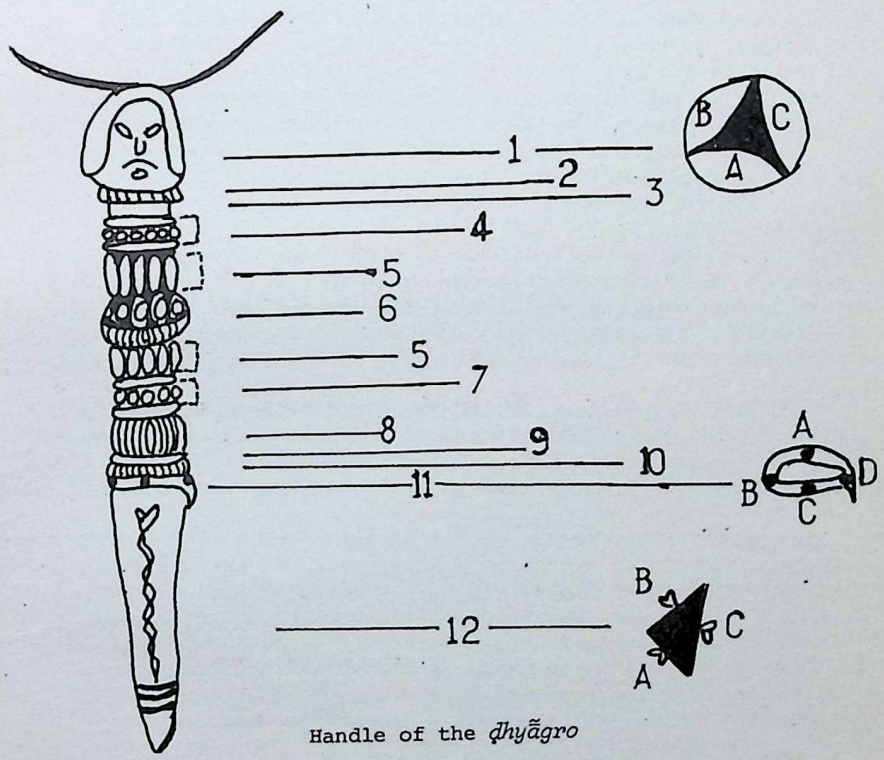
4. *tukse mane:* a small white Tibetan *stupā*.



Male face of the *ḍhyãgro*



Female face of the *ḍhyãgro*



Handle of the *ḍhyãgro*

Fig. 2

5. *lare mane:* a wall of stones where Tibetan inscriptions are inscribed.

6. *badzer guru* (N): the power, force, thunderbolt, cf. *vajra*.[29]

7. *mane tsiter:* a small wall of stones along the edge of roads.

8. *tsatala darti* (N): the seven levels of the earth or the entrance to seven stars.[30]

9. *nāg* (N): a snake coiled on a *pira*.

10. *pira:* a seat made of woven corn leaves. (Cf. Nepāli *pirko*, 'a low wooden stool', Turner 1931:382).

11. a type of pattern with four large dots is engraved in relief. The four dots are: a) *bātsher:* a divinity of the roads;[31] b) *diyo batti* (N): a small clay oil lamp; c) *mandir* (N): a Hindu temple; d) *sang* (N); the *puimbo*'s conch. The last of these dots, (d), straddles the sides A and C of the *murtsil*.

12. *murtsil*: this is the three-sided tapered end of the handle where three *nāga* are sculptured. These three snakes are: a) *kāli nāg* (N): the black snake; b) *padma* (N) *kuli:* the snake divinity of the lotus; c) *astra* (N) *kuli:* the armed snake.

The first thing one notices upon reading this nomenclature is the scarcity of truly Sunwāri terms; in fact, the majority of terms used are either mountain Nepāli or a Tibetan dialect. It is, however, significant to notice the ternary patterns: the three lama, the three *mane*, the three snakes.

The *ḍhyāgro*, as well as the *phurbu* or the lance, is made under the direction of the *puimbo* or *ngiami*. Following a dream of Samarbahadur, his brother Lalbahadur made the two drums used by the *puimbo* of Khaping. Samarbahadur related the story to me as follows:

> 'The *puimbo* had a dream. He was walking in the forest when suddenly his attention was called to a particular tree. He felt his helping spirit ordering him to cut this tree and make a drum from it. When he awoke, he went to the jungle with his brother. The *puimbo* tried to find the spot he had seen in his dream. Suddenly, the tree that had appeared in his vision was standing before his eyes and he began to tremble, communicating with his protective spirit. The spirit (he claims) showed him the branch to cut. As soon as the branch was cut, it was brought back to the village and within three days his brother constructed the *ḍhyāgro*. His

brother also made the stick *(kong-gu)* out of *gungir*. After putting the stick in the fire, he bent it into the shape of an 'S'. When he received his drum, Samarbahadur had to do a rite of Tsagu.'

To the handle of *ḍhyãgro* are attached red and white cloth ribbons *(warshi)* that are offered by the client. At the time of the major public Sunuwar rituals, each side of the drum is decorated with paint. During an important rite, the member of the community who offers this ritual, decorates both faces of the shaman's drum. On the female side, he starts by tracing in white all around the edge, a series of lozenge shapes divided horizontally into equal parts. The top half of the lozenge represents the mountains; the base the plains; and the dividing line the river. Above the topmost points he paints in dots the stars. In the centre of the *ḍhyãgro*, he draws an octagon in the form of two crosses, the one superimposed over the other to form an 8-pointed star. One cross is white, the other yellow or red.[32] Finally at the top of the white cross, he indicates the stars by means of four dots (red and white alternately). On the male side, he again draws 20 white triangles depicting the mountains, every three summits are surmounted by 6 finely curved lines representing a rainbow, above which he once more dots in the Milky Way. In the centre of the drum, he paints a *tirsul* (N), Śiva's trident, at the base of which he outlines two little squares, each containing a cross; on either side of the trident, he draws, in white as always, a moon (on the left) and a sun (on the right). Whatever the ritual, it was always the same motifs that were reproduced.

The *ngiami* has the same gear as the *puimbo*. However, instead of the *jāmā*, she wears a petticoat, *ghãgri* (N),[33] over her dress *(guniũ)* (N).

The *puimbo* or *ngiami* perform various types of rites: A) the major public rites: Tsandi, Ghil, Khas, Pol ... B) seasonal rites: Rikhitarpani,[34] Sri-panchami, feasts of the full moon *(purne)* (N)... C) domestic rites: birth, granting of a name, funerals ... D) propitiatory rites: selection of a site for a dwelling or hunt ... E) curative rites for humans and livestock: Iwa Tsinta, Mewal ...[35]

At the time of these ceremonies the *puimbo* or *ngiami* never make blood sacrifices. In the case of a sacrifice, the *puimbo* calls upon a *nāso*,[36] sacrificer and leader of the major public rites. If you ask a *puimbo* which rites he prefers, he will answer the full moon feasts *(purne)* (N)[37] and the curative rites *(tsinta)* (S). In fact, certain *puimbo* enjoy a reputation as healers or soothsayers that extends far beyond the confines of the village to a radius of a one or two days' walk. Thus each *puimbo* or *ngiami*, according to his merits, establishes a clientele that is always ready to praise his care. The Sunuwar will not usually attempt to find out if his *puimbo* is a *lawa-tung* or a *kiabra-tung*. He does so only if he is

attacked by a wandering soul. In this case, he will choose the best *lawa-tung* exorcist.

The Economic Advantages

The *puimbo* or the *ngiami* are often poorer than their fellow *jhākri* of other ethnic groups. It is all the more astonishing then that they have fewer problems than the Sunuwar priest or sacrificer, the *duma nāso*. The *puimbo* differs from the latter in that he not only receives food and a piece of cloth in the form of remuneration, but also some money. At the time of every full moon *(purne)*, a *puimbo* or a *ngiami* receives a few *paisā* (N) from each house, and not a month passes by, but that he has to perform some propitiary rite, or to cure some illness caused by an evil spirit. Lastly, if he is a good soothsayer, people often come from miles around to consult him; thus he always has a little money at his disposal.

Name of rite	Month	Duration	Remuneration
TSANDI	Baisākh	5 to 7 days	2 *mānā* of rice; 1 jar of beer; each person places a few coins in his *duntahil* bag.
GHIL	Kārtik Mangsir	3 days	5 to 10 rupees; 1 jar of beer, containing 2 *pāthi;* 1 goat's foot; 1 chicken's leg; 1 *gtorma;* 2 *mānā* of parched rice; 1 piece of cloth for the turban; *kashie-taki;* 1 *warshi* (red and white ribbons) for the *phurbu* and for the *ḍhyāgro;* 1 *dader* (red and white ribbons) for the lance.
KHAS/KHASA	Kārtik Mangsir	2 days	1-3 rupees; 1 jar of beer; 1 *mānā* of parched rice; *warshi* for the *phurbu* and

Name of rite	Month	Duration	Remuneration
KHAS/KHASA (contd.)			the *ḍhyãgro*; 1 *dader* for the lance; and a piece of cloth for the turban.
TSAGU/TSHAGU	Kārtik or Mangsir or Pus or Chait	1 night	1-2 rupees; 1 *gtorma*; 1 jar of beer; a piece of cloth for holding the *kashie-taki*; (porcupine quills); *warshi* for the *phurbu* and the *ḍhyãgro* and 1 *dader* for the lance.
MESSELMI		1 morning	1 goat's foot; ½ chicken; 1 jar of beer; a piece of cloth for the turban; 1 *dader* for the lance; *warshi* for the *phurbu* and the *ḍhyãgro*.
BULSO LAGUI or BULSO TULTSA		2 hours	1 rupee; and 2 meals.
RIKHITARPANI	Sāun	1 day and 1 night	2 rupees; 2 meals; 1 *mānā* of beer per house.
AMLA TSINTA		1 day	2 rupees; 2 meals; 1 *mānā* of beer and some meat.
IWA TSINTA		2 or 3 hours	1-5 rupees; 1 meal; a piece of cloth for the turban; 1 *mānā* of beer.
MEWAL TSINTA		1 night	1-2 rupees; 2 meals and 1 *mānā* of beer.

Name of rite	Month	Duration	Remuneration
TARA TSINTA		1 night	2 rupees; 2 meals; 1 *mānā* of beer; 1 *mānā* of spirits *(raksi)*; and ½ chicken.

In view of the above, how is their poverty to be explained? I think it is due first of all to the abuse of alcohol, on which most of their grain and money are spent, and secondly to the poverty of their village clientele who are not able to remunerate them decently. At the present time, one comes across *puimbo* who will tell you, not without a certain affectation, that they prefer not to practice their art, in order to devote their entire energies to their agricultural and pastoral occupations.

The Shaman's Performance

All the séances I have attended were truly spectacular. I will attempt to give two examples.

Prior to the séance, relatives, neighbours, guests, or simply curious friends sat down in the main room, grouping themselves as close together as possible around the fireplace. The patient lay on a mat beneath the altar *(pipilaga)* (S).[38] At the patient's feet and with his back turned toward the patient, the *puimbo* prepared the spirit's altar on a winnowing tray *(giolo)* (S). In the centre of the tray, the *puimbo* placed a small copper cup containing clarified butter *(ghiu)* (N) in which he placed a cotton wick. This was later to be used as a lamp. Around the lamp, he scattered husked rice, and at the four cardinal points, he arranged the lightning stones he had received from the *bashpuimbo*. On the same tray and to the right of the lamp, he placed a femur *(mirk)*. To the left of the lamp, he placed a small sickle *(kurmi)*, an egg, and three *rudrācche* beads detached from one of his rosary necklaces. Near the winnowing tray and to his right, he placed a copper vase *(tāmār)* (N)[39] with a *lopsa* (N)[40] flower and a small incense cup *(dhupero)* (N).[41] To his left he placed a basket *(dālo)* (N) full of corn kernels. He inserted his *phurbu* into the basket. He drove his lance into the ground between the offering platform and the shelf *(ati)* (S) where the water was placed.

At approximately 8.30 p.m., he put on his *jāmā* and the rest of his gear while chanting prayers in Sunuwāri. Sitting cross-legged, shaking his head, he began to rhythmically beat his *ḍhyãgro* and

shake his body. At the same time, he attempted to keep his legs stiff. As the rhythm of his drumming became more accentuated and the shaking of his body more pronounced, he sang very softly in a high-pitched nasal voice. Suddenly he changed the rhythm and passed his drum to someone in the audience. He blew into the femur he had placed on the tray. Then he took grains of rice from his sack and threw them towards the four cardinal points. Placing a hand on each knee, he slowly swayed in time to his humming. Suddenly he gave a start and began to shake more and more violently, before leaping up abruptly. Once he was on his feet, he again took his *ḍhyãgro*, holding the handle in his left hand and the *kong-gu* in his right, and began to dance. At the same time he prayed to his helping spirit to guide him towards the spirit that had inflicted fever upon the Sunuwar woman. He brandished his drum towards the corners of the house and hopped with his feet together. Little by little he moved in the direction of the house altar *(laga)*. He beat his *ḍhyãgro* vehemently. The ring of the cymbals and the tones of the conches and femurs helped to maintain his trance. The possession ended as abruptly as it began, and the *puimbo* suddenly fell to the floor on his knees. The first trance lasted eleven minutes. While smoking a cigarette, the *puimbo* answered questions from members of the audience who were eager to learn the identity of the angered spirit. Spirits were passed around and everyone talked.

At the beginning of the second act, the patient left the corner where she was lying and sat between the two wooden pillars that supported an upper story and the roofing. Having invoked a long list of spirits, the *puimbo* again fell into a trance. He played the *ḍhyãgro*, addressing himself sometimes to the feminine side and sometimes to the masculine, depending upon the sex of the spirit of which he was speaking.[42] At one point, after having passed his *ḍhyãgro* to someone, he seized his lance and placed it in the hearth among the embers and ashes. When the point began to glow, he directed it towards the patient. He repeated this process several times, then he brandished his lance towards the four points of the earth. Finally he pointed it towards the patient, who was progressively assuming a prone position. He then drove the lance into the ground in front of the door. Having placed the sacrificial egg near his lance, he asked for a black hen and held it by the wings in his right hand while twirling his *phurbu* in the left. With the point of his *phurbu*, he touched the shoulders of the patient[43] and spun the cackling, winged creature above the patient's head. He did this several times before throwing the hen and the *phurbu* outside of the house into the yard. This was the end of the second act.

The third act was at once the most spectacular and the most important. On the ground in front of the door, the *puimbo* drew, with corn flour, a diamond shaped form divided into eight triangles. At the centre of this lozenge, he placed a dog's jaw[44] wrapped in

paper and tied with a string. In her right hand, the patient held the other end of the string as if it were a 'leash'. A pan of ashes was placed near the door at the tip of the diamond. The fire had been extinguished. The only light came from the dimly lit *ghiu* lamp on the winnowing tray where the offerings were exposed. The *puimbo* sat at the foot of the ladder facing the patient and the hearth. Once again in a trance, the *piumbo* blew into the femurs and summoned several spirits, speaking to them in a foreign language (it seemed to be Newāri or Kagate-Tamang). He danced while accompanying himself on the *ḍhyãgro*, which he waved horizontally towards the corners of the room or towards the *laga*. After giving his drum to a member of the audience, he spun around above the diamond. Then the took the string from the patient and twirled the jaw around her head and shoulders. When he returned the jaw to the centre of the lozenge, he gave her back the 'leash'.[45] He again grasped his lance, and after having coated the tip with ash, he touched the patient on the shoulders, forehead and neck. He then drove the lance into the diamond. While he danced, he whipped the shoulders, head and back of the Sunuwar woman with the *warshi* of his *phurbu*. Next, he attached a small string to a rice-pestle *(tuli)* (S) that was inserted in a fissure above the door. To the other end of the string he tied the left foot of a hen who kicked about with her head hanging above the magic diamond. The *puimbo* placed ashes at three different places on the string that held the chicken, then ordered the evil spirit to take refuge in the centre of the diamond and promised him the chicken in return. While he danced, the *puimbo* indicated to the spirit the direction he must follow to leave the patient. He said, 'I built an altar for you in a temple (the 'diamond') and I have prepared your path (the 'leash').' As soon as the *puimbo* was convinced that the spirit was abandoning the patient, he whistled between his teeth. At this precise moment, the patient's brother-in-law cut the 'leash' while her husband snipped the string holding the hen. The third person emptied the pan of ashes on the centre of the diamond. The young people busied themselves cleaning the place where the spirit was trapped. The ash, the corn flour, the dog's jaw and everything else was quickly cleared away, to be thrown into the jungle. The porters were escorted by two other boys, one beating the cymbals, the other the magic drum. When the procession returned from the jungle, the patient's husband sprinkled them with a *lopsa* branch before they entered the house. The fire was again lit, and the patient returned to her bed. This was the end of the third act. The *puimbo* commented on his spiritual voyage, but he no longer remembered most of the things he saw and heard. He was, however, able to identify the *sahain* (S),[46] who had attacked the Sunuwar woman. Everyone asked him questions: 'Did you see so and so?' (a relative who died a violent death and who comes back from time to time to bother the client's family). It is surprising to note that during the trance, the spectators continually interrogated and encouraged the *puimbo*. Then they asked him to clarify those answers that remained ambiguous. The last act took place much

later, after the patient's family and the *puimbo* had eaten. It served to demonstrate the power of the *puimbo*'s helping spirit and to confirm the fact that the spirit was in fact gone.

The second séance that I attended took place on December 12, in the middle of the night between 2.00 a.m. and 6.00 a.m., in the home of Yambahadur. Yambahadur had been bedridden for about ten days with a fever. He ate with difficulty and hardly spoke at all. He told me that one evening while returning from the water source, he had been attacked by a ghost and that he had been ill ever since. A *ngiami* (Mayadevi) who was a distant relative, was called and arrived late at night.

After putting on her underskirt *(ghāgri)*, she went quickly into a trance, dancing and humming a litany in a falsetto voice accompanied by her *ḍhyãgro*. She quickly located the evil spirit and ordered him to leave Yambahadur. The spirit demanded a white hen. The neighbours, awakened by the *ngiami*'s drumming, came together to help with the curative ceremony.

While the *ngiami* rested, the household members fetched the hen required by the spirit, and the *ngiami* again began to beat her drum and again fell into a trance. The hen was handed to her and she twirled it over the patient's head in the way described above. She touched Yambahadur's neck with the tip of her *phurbu* and then bit and sucked on it. A little blood appeared on the shaman's lips. She spat two small blood clots and a white bloody feather into a small cup.[47] She claimed that the ghost *(bhut)* (N) had departed for his abode. After clearing his throat several times, Yambahadur announced that he felt better and asked for something to eat. The white hen was killed by a neighbour. Without the help of the shaman, the hen's gizzard and feet were consulted before the hen was cooked. Yambahadur became progressively more lively and came out of his lethargy, announcing with assurance that he was cured. The chicken had not been sacrificed, I was assured, but simply killed at the request of Yambahadur, the convalescent.

The first curative rite was a Mewal Tsinta and the second, carried out by the *ngiami*, a Tara Tsinta. In the two examples described, the *puimbo* and *ngiami* drove away the bothersome spirit by practising a rite of exorcism. Acting through his protective spirit, the shaman forces the *sahain* or *bhut*[48] to leave the patient by offering it the animal it has requested. However, this agreement turns out to be a trick for the animal will not be sacrificed. The case in which the *puimbo* or *ngiami* falls into a trance may seem surprising to the reader. Perhaps we are dealing here with more elaborate techniques than those used by the mediums *(jhãkri)* of neighbouring populations?[49]

These séances resemble dramas composed of several acts in which three characters hold the stage: the patient, the evil spirit and the shaman. Within each act, the scenes are separated by the entrance or exit of an agent or instrument. The public may be called upon to play a walk-on part. Through its questions and encouragement, the public contributes to the unfolding of the action. This, it seems to me, is one of the major reasons for the success of the Sunuwar shaman who entertains the hillmen at the same time that he cures them.

Conclusion

The facts that we have summarized here, based on personal observations, give us a picture, albeit incomplete, of the Sunuwar shaman who differs only slightly from his colleagues of other ethnolinguistic groups of eastern Nepal.[50] The two important distinctions existing at present are as follows: 1) function of an assistant priest that the *puimbo* uses at the time of the major public Sunuwar rituals, and 2) the manner in which he is buried.

Since 1947, the Sunuwar have discontinued the practice of burying their dead, in favour of cremation. Nevertheless, they still inhume the *nāso* and the *puimbo*: the former in a standing position, the latter in a sitting position.[51] Both are dressed in their ceremonial regalia, and according to my informants, salt is stacked around the corpses before the grave is sealed. Over the *nāso*'s grave they hang his drum (*duma*, N, *ḍhol*, N) or (*tsiri*, S, *ḍhol*), and on those of the *puimbo* or the *ngiami* they place their *ḍhyãgro* and cymbals.

In spite of the growing influence of Hinduism in the east of Nepal, resulting from the demographic thrust of the Brahmans and Chetris, the *puimbo* and *ngiami* retain their clientele and continue to train future shamans. As healer, guide and soothsayer, the *puimbo* remains the most influential figure of his community. The day when there will be enough doctors, chemists and teachers in the region, the *puimbo*'s days will be numbered, for his function will no longer have any meaning for the Sunuwar society.

Alain Fournier

1. This investigation took place between August 1969 and February 1970, within the framework of the *RCP Nepal of the CNRS*. I wish to thank Mr. C. Jest, who was at that time the director. I also wish to thank Miss G. Stein and Mr. A.W. Macdonald, who were kind enough to read this manuscript and offer me numerous suggestions. The transliteration system used for the Sunuwāri is my own. For the Nepāli, I used that of R.L. Turner (1965).

2. Tsandi, Ghil and Khas are rituals performed in honour of a new-born child in the lineage or the village. The forefathers are invoked, and buffaloes, pigs, goats and chickens are sacrificed.

3. This is the definition of the Muglan *jhākri* given by Mr. A.W. Macdonald (1962:107-139).

4. *Bash*, in Sunuwāri, means 'jungle or forest'. This may be a deformation of the English word, 'bush'. The word *puimbo* corresponds to the Nepāli term, *jhākri*, 'diviner, conjurer, wizard' (Turner 1931:231).

5. *Shala* in Sunuwāri means 'women's long hair'. It is significant to note that in all of Nepal, there is a symbolic system where hair is a bearer of evil. Some very helpful comments on this may be found in Gaborieau (1969:31 and 49).

6. 'a particular kind of long garment worn by children wizards and bridgegrooms'. (Turner 1931:215).

7. 'a big drum' (Turner 1931:269). This drum is used only by the *puimbo*, *ngiami* or *jhākri*. It may even be considered as their trademark.

8. 'The *jhākri* ... is a being who falls into a trance during which time voices speak through his person, thus enabling him to diagnose illnesses and sometimes cure them, give advice on the future and shed light on present matters in function of past events' (Macdonald 1962:108).

9. *dobāte*: 'Situated at the juncture of two roads' (Turner 1931:320); *bhir*: 'brave man, hero, warrior' (Turner 1931: 445). This is the spirit of the cross-roads.

10. This is perhaps borrowed from the Tibetan *lha*:[11] a class of ancient Tibetan deities who lost their original identity after having been set equal to the devas of the Indian mythology' (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956b:268). Or perhaps, it is borrowed from *lhapa*, the Tibetan 'medium'?

11. *Castanopsis indica* Roxb in Flora of Phulchoki, Katmandu, 1969, Ministry of Forest, Dept. of Medicinal Plants, p.18.

12. *Neyraudia Madagascariensis* (Turner 1931:158). Macdonald (1962:110) mentions this creeper liana used as a *ḍhyãgro* baton. In Nepāli it is called *ghuṁriṅ*.

13. *Asparagus plumosus* (Turner 1931:100). In Nepāli it is called *kurilo*.

14. L.A. Waddel (1895:206) describes the various necklaces of the Tibetan magician and notes that necklaces made of snake vertebrae are the most precious. *Cheba* (S). *Sarpa:* 'snake' (Turner 1931:591).

15. I think that this is a corruption of the Nepāli *garuda*, the vulture-bird, the Tibetan *khyung*: 'a gigantic iron-bird with copper beak and copper claws, the enemy of the offender of the Bon' (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956b:240).

16. 'burning ground where the dead are burnt; burial ground cemetery, a ghost' (Turner 1931:496).

17. 'Shield' (Turner 1931:265); R. de Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956b: 546) writes: 'an important part of the outfit worn by the shaman of the Golds and Buriats is the so-called *toli*, a mirror-like polished plate of copper carried on the breast or on the back, and said to have been originally a shield protecting against evil forces'.

18. See footnote 81 of Macdonald (1962:137).

19. *p'ur-pa* or *pur-bu* in Tibetan (Jaschke 1969).

20. *Trapa nutans* (Turner 1931:605). It is called *siṅaro* in Nepāli.

21. *Rhododendron arboreum* (*Medicinal Plants of Nepal* 1970:127).

22. These are sacrificial cakes made with flour in a triangular or human form. (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956b:347-356).

23. Although there are no tigers at this altitude but only panthers *(Panthera uncia)*, the Sunuwar always speak of panthers as if they were tigers.

24. Concerning the horn made of a femur see Macdonald (1962: footnote 38).

25. *tsotsi: Ficus lacor* Buch-Ham. (*Medicinal Plants of Nepal* 1970:25) or *Ficus glaberrima* (Turner 1931:87); *dhupi/dhopi:*

Juniperus recurva Buch-Ham. (*Medicinal Plants of Nepal* 1970:72) or *Juniperus sabina* (Turner 1931:330).

26. It is possible that *dader* is a deformation of *mda'dar* Tibetan 'divination-arrow' (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956b:365-368). *dar* in Tibetan means 'standard or war-flag', see Jaschke (1969:251).

27. In 1967, the symbols made by the Bare of Kathmandu cost from 15 to 50 rupees, according to their size. Those of the Samarbahadur cost 45 rupees, that is, half the monthly salary of a country teacher.

28. *sẻn-ge* or *siṅ-ge* perhaps means 'the lion'. See H.A. Jaschke (1969:575); *nyi-ma* 'the sun' (Jaschke 1969:187); *urgin*, according to Mrs. A.M. Large-Blondeau (personal communication), is the deformation of the Tibetan word *U-rgyan* or *O-rgyan*, which designates the birthplace of Padmasambhava, Oddiyana. This region would be the valley of the Swat in Afghanistan and Pakistan (Tucci 1958).

29. This is thunder, lightning, flash. (Turner 1931:415). It also designates 'the power of thunder' in tantric Buddhism.

30. This is the contraction of *sat tale dharti*: *sāt* 'seven'; *talo* 'storey'; (Turner 1931:276); *dharti*, 'the earth' (Turner 1931:325); that is, the seven stories of the earth.

31. This is the contraction of *bāṭo*, 'road, path, way, journey' (Turner 1931:432) and *iswar*, 'God' (Turner 1931:42). That is, 'a god of the roads'.

32. For the colours, the Sunuwars use whitewash for white, the yellow of the *tastsi* flower: *Edgeworthia gardneri* Mess. (*Medicinal Plants of Nepal* 1960:8) *dubi* plant: *Rubia cordifolia* Linn. (*Medicinal Plants of Nepal* 1970:109) or red clay mixed with water.

33. 'frock, petticoat, child's dress' (Turner 1931:156).

34. Concerning the *rikhitarpani*, also called *jānaipurnimā*, see Jest (1966:143-152) and Macdonald (1972:73-80). The *puimbo*, *ngiami* and *jhākri* meet during an entire day and night at Panch-Pokhari, near the source of the Khimti Khola, on the banks of the five lakes where they play the *ḍhyāgro*. 'Very frequently a lake is regarded as a *bla gnas* on which the life of a man or even a whole nation depends' (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956b:482).

35. The meaning of the word is uncertain. It is perhaps *cintā* 'thought, purpose, imagination, speculation', *cintā garnu:*

'to think' (Turner 1931:176), or *cittā*: 'falling on the back, fail miserably' (Turner 1931:175).

36. The *nāso* is 'a man of knowledge and a conductor of rituals who knows the propitiatory formulae *(pidar)* used for invoking the deities of the Sunuwar pantheon and who sacrifices buffaloes, pigs, goats or chicken during public or semi-public ceremonies' (Fournier 1973a:2). The Duma Naso holds the most sway among the *naso*, the others acting as his assistants (Sher-pa Nāso, Dhupe Naso or Shipe Naso).

37. This is the night of the full moon (Turner 1931:386). On this night the *puimbo* plays his drum until late at night.

38. The *pipilaga* is one of the four *laga* found in every Sunuwar residence. The *laga* are small altars dedicated to the ancestors, to the spirits of the lineage. The *pipilaga* is dedicated to children dead at an early age.

39. *tāmā*: 'copper' (Turner 1931:279). This is in fact a copper pot.

40. *Artemisia nilgaris* Linn. (*Medicinal Plants of Nepal* 1970: 64).

41. There are various types of incense but the most common are made from the juniper tree.

42. The *puimbo* or *ngiami* hold the handle of the *ḍhyãgro* in the left hand and beat with the *kong-gu* in the right hand. When they are talking with a spirit, they raise the side that corresponds to the sex of the god to face level.

43. More than a century ago, Schlagintweit (1863:147) described the same process of expulsion among the Tibetans: 'the phurbu when pointed in the direction of demons and accompanied by the repetition of magical formula, will chase demons away and destroy them'.

44. 'The most effectious method, however, to suppress the *sri* is to bury or set out the skulls of men and animals which have been filled with slips of paper with magic spells' (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956b:516). The *puimbo* are among the few Sunuwar who know how to read and sometimes even write.

45. 'It is remarkable that sometimes when carrying out such a rite a string is tied with one end to one hand of the medium and with the other end of the severed leg of the sacrificial animal. The string should apparently serve as a kind of a 'path' through which the spirit enters the body of the medium' (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956b:551).

46. This is a wandering soul, subsequent to a bad death.

47. 'a typical shamanistic feature is also the Tibetan custom to suck an illness out of the body of a patient by means of an arrow, the Tibetan magician ... shows a worm or some other object which he had 'sucked out' of the body of the patient'. (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956b:544).

48. This is a ghost, an evil spirit (Turner 1931:479). It is also a type of bogey-man used to threaten children.

49. Mr. A.W. Macdonald was surprised by this in his article on the sorcerer in Nepal (1966:291).

50. The Sunuwār terms *ngiami* and *puimbo* are similar to the Surel terms *'giamini'* and *'poembo'* (Fournier 1974) or to the Jirel shaman *'pem-bo'* (Ibid.). *Ngiami* may be linked to the Lepcha term 'yāmā', the female shaman of the Lepchas or the Limbus (Gorer 1938:216). *Puimbo* may be compared with the Tamang.

51. For the respective roles of the *nāso* and the *puimbo*, see Fournier (1973a:2-7).

VII

SHAMANISM AMONG THE THULUNG RAI

The Thulung Rai live for the most part within some nine village panchayats forming a continuous tract around the confluence of the Dudh Kosi and the Solu Khola.[1] They are clearly defined as speakers of a Tibeto-Burman language distinct from that of neighbouring Rai subtribes, and were at one time no doubt sole occupants of the area. Nowadays hamlets or households of more than a dozen castes[2] live interspersed among them, the great majority being Hindus or strongly Hinduised, and most speaking Nepāli as a first language. Day-to-day interaction between Thulung and non-Thulung varies somewhat with the detailed demographic history of particular villages but has been in progress for many generations. This leads to the first problem implicit in the title. One would like to concentrate on what is specifically Thulung and avoid repeating what is already known (thanks largely to Macdonald) about the *jhãkri* as a role that is widespread within the Nepāli-speaking world. But the Thulung themselves, with a syncretism typical of the area, happily blur this distinction, and synchronically at least, it would be artificial to hold to it rigorously, even if my data allowed. However, we shall on occasion distinguish between Thulung *jhãkri* and non-Thulung or native Nepāli-speaking ones; the former might alternatively be referred to as *bijuwā* (N) or as *seleme*, but no convenient label suggests itself for the latter.[3]

The second problem, the term 'shamanism', is equally unavoidable. This is because within the general class of ritual officiants *(dhāmi nokcho)*, the Thulung distinguish quite clearly between *jhãkri* and 'tribal priests' *(dewa nokcho)*. An aspect of the contrast that is stressed by most Thulung is that the priest lacks the personal spirit that enables the *jhãkri* to become possessed. Simplifying a little, one might say that the priest deals with the orderly supernatural, the properly integrated ancestors, and the fertility of the village agricultural land, while the *jhãkri* deals with the forces of disorder that afflict individual households. It is difficult to decide whether a paper on shamanism should focus on one or other officiant, or on both of them or on a selection of the activities of both of them; they do in fact share a good deal of paraphernalia and many ritual techniques. In favour of the priest, it might be urged that in

A group of youthful Thulung *jhãkri* at the *caĩya* festival

the normal course of events it is he who acts as psychopomp; also that as the more conservative of the two, he is less influenced by the culture of Nepāli-speakers and perhaps closer to central Asiatic shamans in the sense of Eliade (1964). It is true that he is not generally supposed to be subject to mental states that could be described as possession or ecstasy, but I am not convinced that this is a matter of great importance. In spite of what was said above, there is in Jubu village a well-established priest who is sometimes voluntarily possessed. Although for many *jhãkri* gaining this ability is a major crisis, it would seem that individuals such as the Jubu priest, who are already ritual specialists of one sort, can acquire the capacity simply as a further technique in their repertoire without either they or their society regarding it as a significant change. Thus, among the Thulung, as elsewhere, the distinction in title and function between tribal priest and *jhãkri* is apparently becoming blurred.[4] If this is so, to describe only one element in the fusion is to mutilate the total picture. In spite of these considerations, space forbids adequate treatment of both types of officiant, and we shall settle for the *jhãkri* on the grounds that it is typically he who is voluntarily possessed.

The initiative in the recruitment of a *jhãkri* is ascribed not to humans but to a god who selects or favours (*rucāunu*, N) some individual, typically by possessing him in the course of a séance. In principle the god's choice is not limited by sex, family line, caste or quota. In fact females (usually called *dhāmini*, N) are relatively rare; I met with none who performed séances, though groups of them were seen in action at fairs (see below). Vocation is not supposed necessarily to run in families, though it may do so. In Dewsa the patrilineal descendants of the mythical Thulung figure Salewa are said to include *jhãkri* to this very day, and in Lokhim a certain *jhãkri* was esteemed on the grounds that his gifts came both from 'his own people' and his mother's. As we have noted, the tribal priest is generally supposed to be immune from vocation.

Informants held that *jhãkri* could appear in any caste, though I met with no instance among Brahman. There were said to be no Thulung *jhãkri* in Tingla, two in Jubu, eight in Mukli, and around fifteen in Lokhim, which is to say very roughly that the numbers are proportional to the ratio in each village of Thulung to Nepāli-speakers. There was a disproportionate number of Kami *jhãkri*, especially relative to other untouchables. Trends in the total *jhãkri* population are unclear; some informants thought that the absolute number was on the increase. However, it seemed that the more travelled, prosperous and educated avoided the vocation, and if they were religiously inclined, were drawn more towards the practices of the literate tradition. None of the *jhãkri* I met were wealthy by local standards, and several were noticeably poor, for instance, Simbure of Mukli, who was deaf and dumb as a result

of a blow on the head in childhood. However, there seems to be nothing else that would support the theory that vocation is an expression of 'protest by the politically impotent' (Lewis 1971:32).

The neophyte typically learns his art from an established *jhãkri*. The teacher is not necessarily of the same caste and instances were recorded of a Mukli Kami studying with a Thulung and a Tingla Gharti studying with a Sunuwar. The Gharti's possessing *deutā* was said to be a Tamang (perhaps related to the fact that his great-grandfather was of that caste), and part of his invocation was in that language. Pupil and teacher should go together to a solitary place (*ekānta*, N) for the transmission of the knowledge. However, another Mukli Kami, Baunne, claimed to have acquired the art without a teacher and such *bhuĩ-phuṭṭā* (N) *jhãkri* are a recognized possibility; there is a Thulung verb, *phlīmu* 'to prepare or initiate (an officiant)', which can be used in the intransitive form *phlūsimu* to refer to this situation.

An episode from this period of a *jhãkri*'s career is recounted in the following story (version by Ph of Mukli).[5]

'Baginanda was an officiant *(nokcho)* of long ago. During his initiatory period when he needed to make his drum, he called his gods or spirits, and his god (*deutā*, N) gave him the tree for his drum (across the Dudh Kosi river) at the place called Bangdel (near Sungdel, ? = Saungdel on maps). He collected a couple of assistants from this village and they went off to make the drum. The tree turned out to be in the garden (*bāri*, N) of one of the local Bangdiles, who asked them what they were up to. 'This is the tree my tutelary spirit (*guru*, N) has given me for a drum; that's why we have come to cut it,' said Baginanda. So they made the drum and covered the ends with hide.

'Meanwhile the Bangdiles made a plan. 'How good is he, this officiant who comes and cuts trees in our garden? Next thing it will be our house. We'll get him to hold a séance, and then we'll give him a thorough beating.' So after the drum was covered, one of them said: 'You mustn't leave without performing a séance in my house.' They stopped him from going and made a further plan. Somewhere they got hold of a *puwang* (onomatopoeic name for a sort of owl, *koirālo*, N) and arranged to serve it up to the officiant and his friends. So they cooked the bird and gave it to them with their meal. But by means of his magical powers *(yum)*, Baginanda had already seen through them. 'They are giving us *puwang*, a kind of meat that is not to be eaten. Just pretend to be eating it, and in fact pour it onto my plate.' The assistants followed the instructions he had given, and while Baginanda kept everyone's eyes distracted they just pretended to eat. Then he brought the bird to life, knitting together the pieces of meat. (Narrator returns to Baginanda's instructions). 'When I bring the *puwang* to life they will try and attack us. The bird will

cry *'puwang'* and fly in the air. I'll shout 'haha' and go off in pursuit. You hang on to the drum on either side.'

'After the meal, when the séance was in progress, the local people crowded in on all sides, each holding a stick and ready to attack. Then Baginanda brought to life the *puwang* he had been given as meat. The bird cried *'puwang'*, and with a loud 'haha!' Baginanda was off after it. In a flash he was out of the house. The angry villagers with their sticks chased after him, but he flew off to the north. His assistants hung on either side of the drum, which flew them up to - I forget the name of the place, this side of the river Rawa, where the drum sounded (?broke). Continuing northwards, they reached Birajura where their pursuers turned back. On they went, and Baginanda brought his drum and assistants home and held a séance. He worked copper (*tãbo*, N) and bell-metal (*kãso*, N), and down at Sakhle, here in Mukli, are the cymbals he made. So is the wooden drum and the earthenware pot that he wrought with his magical power *(yum)*, and also his long, straight gourd. When we were children, I heard the old men, his descendants, telling of Baginanda, and the pot, the gourd and the cymbals I have seen with my own eyes - they are still in existence today.'

Two other versions were collected, from G in Mukli and from K in Lokhim, but even with their aid our commentary will leave many loose ends. The identity of Baginanda himself raises problems, though all versions agree that he came from Mukli and G even gives the hamlet (Dorphu). In K's version he is the father of K's maternal grandfather Dokole, and the son of Kroksiu, son of Chepa Raja, who in turn was apparently grandson of the tribal founding hero, Ramli. On the other hand (though this would be unlikely to occur to a Thulung), the name is evidently non-Bodic; no doubt the name and story have separate histories. His powers were 'amazing' (*tamãs*, N), but there is no direct evidence that he was any sort of archetypal or primal shaman.

The making of the drum is the main point of the episode, but what sort of drum? There are two distinct types in the area (omitting those used for pleasure and by the Damai tailor-musicians). The *ḍhyāṅgro* (N) and its use are described and illustrated in Macdonald (1962), cf. also Fournier (1973b, revised in this volume). The *ḍhol* (N) is less elaborate.. The two striking surfaces, of the same dimensions as in the *ḍhyāṅgro*, are 1½-2 feet apart and never in my experience have designs traced on them. Lacking a handle, the drum is suspended from one's neck or a pole, and struck alternately on each surface with a simple, straight baton held in either hand. The Thulung priest is never accompanied by the *ḍhyāṅgro*, while the Thulung *jhãkri* only occasionally uses the *ḍhol*, and the non-Thulung ones never do so in my experience. In the stories, Ph talks only of the *ḍhol*, with one exception; G talks of the *ḍhol-ḍhyāṅgro* as a pair, once mentioning

the latter alone; K definitely conceives of both drums being made on the same occasion, though once refers to the *ḍhol* by itself. The implication is that formerly officiants such as Baginanda had at least equal need for both instruments. But the lexical evidence takes us a step further. The assistant of either a priest or *jhãkri* is called a *ḍhole* or *ḍholiya*, and the corresponding word, *ḍhyāṅgre*, is never used. The Thulung for *ḍhol* is an altered form of the Nepāli word (*ḍela, ḍela* or *ḍeola* in different dialects), whereas there is no distinct Thulung word for the *ḍhyāṅgro*, nor for the doubly-recurved baton (*gajo*, N) which is normally used to play it and is never used on the *ḍhol*. In this area, then, the *ḍhol* is probably older than the *ḍhyāṅgro*.

The translated version omits the procedure by which the neophyte is guided to the tree from which to make his drum, a procedure which is widely known and is mentioned by Macdonald (1962:119). Uttering a *mantra* (V), he discharges (literally 'sends') a porcupine quill (G,K) which flies straight off and plants itself in a tree; some say a plume may be used. A variety of trees may be indicated in this way, e.g. *lāmpāte* (N,G) or *malagiri* (? = *malayāgiri*, N). Mango of Lokhim claimed that his plume planted itself in a *phulphuṭṭa* (N) tree some way up the Hongu Khola. G and K locate Baginanda's tree at Para (on the Liding Khola); respectively in a private garden (*ghuryān*, N), or in the middle of the village. For K the tree was a truly enormous *bohori* (N) and Baginanda flew there, his two assistants following on foot, asking their way as they went. Beating a metal plate (*thāl*, N), often used instead of a drum, Baginanda began dancing high up in the tree. The Parali gather round and try and prevent this foreigner (*birānu*, N) from cutting their tree, but he silences them by putting them in a trance (*mohani*, N). He fells the tree with a plume, hollows out the drums, and covers them with his assistants' help, then frees the Parali from their trance.

The plume and tree need further comment. The plume, *parbung*, usually distinguished from the ordinary feather *(pasiurium)* appears in various ritual contexts. It is often used as a magical cutting weapon. Simbure is still reputed to be able to cut bamboos with a feather, just as in ancient Tibet Bonpos were said to cut iron (Stein 1959:232). In another story two *jhãkri* who drain a lake do so with a blow of their plumes, and in a more symbolic manner the Jubu priest stroked a fowl's feather through his lips as a weapon against evil forces. The *jhãkri*'s headdress (like that of royalty) generally includes peacock plumes, though pheasants' are said to be acceptable. The tail feathers of a suspended bird may be planted in a *thān* (See below). The word itself, sometimes *paribung*, is of some interest. The second element belongs to a semantically complex family which relates the head, flowers and flourishing (Allen 1972:92-3); the first, which we shall meet again, refers to the other world, i.e. the world of the dead (? cf. *pāri*, N, 'across').

There are many echoes of classical central Asiatic shamanism in the Baginanda story, and it is natural to suspect that the drum would have been cut from a cosmic tree (Eliade 1964:168ff). Several features of K's account can be interpreted in this light, in particular the emphasis on the vastness of the tree.[6] In west Nepal, during his initiation, the neophyte, having climbed a tree, is supposed to demonstrate that he can divine the future (Hitchcock 1967:155). Perhaps we can see a distant reflection of this motif in the fact that the assistants did not know what was in store for them until they were told by Baginanda, when they went outside to wash their hands for the meal (G; K also mentions the washing). In any case, in this context, the killing, cutting up and resurrection of the bird reflects rather clearly the well-known pattern of initiatory dismemberment followed by rebirth. In Russia the new body of the neophyte need not contain all the component material of the old (Eliade 1964:367), and similarly in one version the assistants are allowed to eat the juice; it is the lumps of flesh and bone (*cokṭā*, N) that are collected and restored to life (G). It is a full seance he is conducting, with alternating periods of invocation and dancing (K), and it is for his own sake, not as the Parali think, for theirs (G); no doubt it is to give himself the power to undertake the resurrection and escape. For the Parali are set on killing him, not merely on giving him a thrashing, and have crowded into the house blocking both doors (G,K). K makes the bird suddenly jump onto the *ḍhol* to give its cry, and we may perhaps understand that it is this act which gives the drum its power of flight. One hearer of the story understood that the drum was actually the vehicle on which Baginanda flew, but details of the escape and return are a little unclear. In G the Parali are in trance for a period before they begin pursuing, and the journey is interrupted at Bagacol (Bankachol on maps). K seems to suggest a ferrying process for the assistants and interrupts the journey at Sukhe Pokhari above Jubu. The two interruptions in Ph make one wonder whether earlier versions of the story may not have had more stages on the return journey from the 'centre'. K alone continues into a story about how Baginanda was invited to Kathmandu to cure the queen of leprosy and came back with one or two pairs of horses and a lakh of rupees as reward for his success.

The episode was narrated more as an interesting old story than as a significant part of tribal oral tradition *(muddum)*, and it is difficult to relate it either to contemporary life or to history. Admittedly it is congruent with some current local ideas, e.g. on the method of selecting the tree, and on the close relationship between *jhãkri* and birds - some Thulung say that the first tribal *jhãkri* was the *kalcũḍo* (N) bird who divines the cause of an illness in the Thulung myth of creation (the more Hinduised naturally refer to Siva). On the other hand, folk tales travel, and in spite of the ways in which the narrators attach the story to local geography and mythical figures, there is no guarantee for instance that ideas

of dismemberment ever played a part in the initiation of Thulung officiants. Nor is there anything else to suggest that the Thulung formerly knew how to work metals; nowadays the officiants' bells and cymbals are made by Newar craftsmen, as indeed are all pottery vessels.

Séances (*cintā*, N; no distinct Thulung word) may be held regularly, often annually, as prophylaxis, or in response to a particular medical problem when simple day-time exorcism has proved ineffective.[7] The distinction is not a sharp or recognized one since in the former case the *jhākri* is likely to discover some immediate threat, and in the latter, treatment of a particular patient will usually be accompanied by prophylaxis for the household. In very serious affairs, such as a bad death or a fire, the séance may need to be repeated, if on a lesser scale, a year later. The householder can invite any *jhākri* who can be persuaded and who he thinks is likely to be effective. The date is fixed by mutual convenience without any recourse to astrological considerations.

Arriving a little after dusk, the *jhākri* may bring his own assistant to help with building the *thān* and with drumming, or one or more may be recruited from those present; the role is not regarded as skilled and usually a child will do. Neighbours will assemble, anything from two to more than twenty, often without formal invitation, either for fun or because they have a question to put to the *jhākri* when he is possessed. They may attend to proceedings, doze or depart, as and when they wish.

The *jhākri* unpacks his material and costume from the special basket in which they are kept (*bhune* or *ḍeli*, N). An untouchable officiant cannot of course enter the house and the *thān* is then built on the verandah, the orientation being unimportant. Otherwise the officiant has the option of performing indoors, in the area downhill of the fire in a Thulung house; only a Rai may build his *thān* facing uphill, i.e. towards the fire. The *thān* is based on a moulded lump of cowdung in which is stuck a criss-cross fence of four-inch bamboo slivers; the length from which they are made is shaved so that the slivers frill out at the upper end. Eighteen-inch lengths of whole bamboo treated similarly (*phurke*, N) may be planted nearby and are also used by the officiant in the treatment of the patient, for sprinkling, and when dancing.[8] Cotton thread is wound around the construction, which may also have quills and plumes planted in it and a small sickle and knife (*khurpi* and *karda*, N) or lengths of antler propped against it. In front a brass plate containing pounded rice supports a brass vessel *lohoṭā* (N), but called *kalas* (N) in ritual contexts. This should contain a gluey fluid (*khasku* or *khosku*) made by pounding *kāulo (N)* leaves in water, in principle using a tiger's bone as pounder. Sprigs (*syāula*, N) of the same tree project from the mouth of the vessel. Around, leaf plates of pounded rice support various objects: quartz crystals and other stones said to have fallen from

heaven,[9] bones, an egg coloured red with *sindur* (N), an oil candle (*diyo*, N). Nearby is planted a trident, a spear (*barchā*, N), or wooden knife (*thurmi*, N) with a bunch of coloured cloth strips (*dhajo*, N) attached. Cinders burn on a flat stone or in a censing vessel (*dhupauro*, N).

This sort of *thān*, with minor variations, is fairly standard, but I doubt if it is the subject locally of any detailed or systematic exegesis. In what is no doubt the older and less acculturated style, although a *thān* is built, the focus of interest is the *huseo* (Lokhim) or *hoptang* (elsewhere). This is an animal which in the course of the rite is hung above the officiant's head and receives offerings of beer splashed from gourds kept on the *thān*. Depending partly on the householder's means, it is either the front half of a pig, or a fowl (which may be hung up living); a generation ago a particularly reputed officiant in Mukli used to suspend a frog (*pāhā*, N, a large and edible variety) 'as a substitute for a man, because it was not possible to kill men'. On one occasion in Lokhim the fowl was hung from the eighth and topmost rung of a ladder on the downhill wall of the house. On either side were tied branches of *kāulo*, and a spring of this, bound together with a *phurke* into a sort of wand, was inserted in the rafters. Half way up the ladder was tied (*chādnu*, N) the *ḍhol* which, some of the time, was beaten simultaneously with a *ḍhyāṅgro* and a brass plate. The latter may be struck indifferently with a length of horn, the back of a knife, or a twig.

The *jhākri*'s costume is as in Macdonald (1962) except that outside the turban the Thulung tie a sort of fringe *(sewari)* hand-made from bright coloured dyed wool and the yellow *sunākhari* (N) fibre.[10] Some *jhākri* wear two pouches (*jābi*, N) or a bandolier of snake vertebrae, as well as the usual *rudrācche* (N) (altered to *ludra* in Lokhim). A *jhākri* may have an ordinary Hindu *ṭupi* just beside his professional pigtail. The undyed turban is traditional, but I have seen Kami and Tamang *jhākri* with red ones.

Several of the elements of the *thān* are clearly associated with purification, which may be a prominent theme in the preliminaries to a séance. The area where the *thān* is to be built may be specially smeared with cow-dung, ritual paraphernalia may be censed, rice may be thrown over the assistant, flower petals tucked around the sides of the *ḍhyāṅgro*. The wording of the invocations that follow is difficult to make out, impossible in the case of Simbure, whose high-pitched moan is wordless. Nami *jhākri* certainly call on the Sora Sikari (e.g. Kamlung, Goti, Seti, Kali, Rakta), among other spirits. Thulung ones are said to invoke *inter alia* birds, grasshoppers and the spirits of the waters and jungle.[11]

Eventually possession is signalled by shaking and the *jhākri* can answer questions (*kahiran lyāunu* or *bhannu*, N; the same

expression is used of a *jhãkri* reporting the results of a divination). Questions are put in a rapid, urgent tone of voice and are addressed to God (*Parmesura*, N). They often include a request for the utmost possible clarity. In spite of this, the reply is apt to be cryptic; however the *jhãkri* can afterwards usually give further explanation. There may be more than one of these question-answer sessions in a séance. It is interesting that they are ordinarily held in Nepāli, even when the *jhãkri* is a Thulung; the one held by a Jubu priest in the course of his day-time ancestral rite was an exception. The sessions did not occur at Sinbure' sessions, nor are they a necessary feature of the 'large séances' *(ţhulo cintā)* which are or used to be held after a death classified as bad or unnatural, in order 'to kill the *siup*', i.e. to dispose of the particularly dangerous spirit that has resulted.

Unfortunately most of my data on 'large séances' are second hand, from a Tingla informant who claimed to have witnessed four or five. In the spectrum of séances they seem to represent not only the largest in scale but also the most conservative. For such a ceremony relatives and neighbours have to be invited and feasted with rice and generous supplies of alcohol; several hundred rupees would be spent. A pig must be killed for the *hoptang*. A Thulung *jhãkri* in full costume is obligatory, a *ḍhol* will be used, and as many as six assistants, each with a *ḍhyāṅgro*, will help in seeing off the dangerous spirit. Although the destination is unclear, it is certain that the *jhãkri* is supposed by means of his dancing to be undertaking some sort of mystical journey.

Such journeys are also undertaken in some ordinary séances when the *jhãkri* dances. Thus on one occasion at Lokhim the *jhãkri* was said to have reached Phyliuku (ritual name for Mukli) via Sabali (a cliff north of the Hongu Khola). According to an experienced Mukli layman, a *jhãkri*'s journey is broken into eight stages *(halam)* marked by different dance styles *(sili)*, for the most part imitative of different species of birds. In Tingla officiants are said to know sixteen different styles, some named after animals, as well. One which is easily recognized is the ferryman's style (*mājhi*, N, *sili*), in which, as he circles, the *jhãkri* makes a paddling gesture, first on one side, then the other, with a *phurke*; at some point he holds out a fold of his robe for the audience to contribute a few coins, which are interpreted by some as the boatman's fee (*khewā*, N), by others as offerings to the dead man. In an ordinary séance the object of the journey may be to get (from heaven, someone suggested) a mysterious substance, *chiţ-khoa*, which the *jhãkri* ingests and which serves both to strengthen him against mystical attack (so that *hān-bān lāgdaina*, N), and to capture evil spirits. If a layman saw it, it would hurt his eyes, but it was compared to bird-lime, to spider's webs and to fly-paper (such as I had hanging in my room). Apparently at the end of a séance it is sent back.

Thulung *jhãkri* do not necessarily dance at a séance, and non-Thulung ones certainly do so sometimes. However, I was left with the impression that the notion of a journey symbolized by dancing was much more elaborated among the Thulung, who often knew of no exact Nepāli equivalents for the concepts involved. It is true that there exist Thulung expressions for being possessed (the possessing agency is a *buwalem*, rendered as *banjhãkri* or *banes-khandi*, (N); nevertheless possession seems to be a more essential feature of the séances of native Nepāli-speaking *jhãkri* than of Thulung ones.

The majority of séances contain an act (in the theatre's sense of the word) very similar to that described by Hosten (1909:681-2) under the title, 'Cutting the road to heaven'. Scene 1 is preparatory. The patient or those at risk sit on the verandah, and the road is symbolized by a cotton thread or threads several feet long running from them to a structure erected in the courtyard. The commonest is a banana sapling whose trunk or stalk is anointed with red powder *(sindur)*; rarely a bamboo serves instead. Around it there may be leaf plates and a mandala-like design in flour (*rekhā*, N, literally 'lines'), which on one occasion was covered with a sheet of paper supporting eleven piles of rice crowned with coins or flowers. Another structure, the 'other-worldly house' (*parinem*, cf. *paribung* above) may be built as an alternative, or subsequently, or in parallel, as in one case where the husband was connected to the banana stump and the wife to the model house. The house is explained as that of the spirit who is 'eating' the patient. Its corners are formed by four *mālingo* (N) bamboos and it may be roughly roofed with thatching grass. The floor is raised to form a platform on which may be placed miniature leaf plates of rice and stew. On another occasion a lump of cactus was buried beneath the structure, ghee was heated on a small flame on the level of the earth and the 'floor' was formed by a sheet of paper on which the *jhãkri* had drawn designs in charcoal. At one séance in Lokhim, the thread road was interrupted by splinters shaved that afternoon from the edge of a plank bridge in the village; at another it led on from the banana to a lizard immobilized by being tied to a stick in a Thulung (K) myth the lizard introduces death among mankind . Other objects that may be associated with the banana are a thread cross (called a 'butterfly') and a short twig with nine wicks tied along it. However, Simbure performed the rite on an altogether smaller and less elaborate scale, once on a verandah, once in a doorway.

In scene 2, fowl or pigeons are waved over the heads of the patients, evil forces are threatened with weapons, and the *jhãkri* dances around the structure. Details vary, but the climax comes when the thread is ruptured and the structure cut in two, burned or broken. In scene 3, a number of objects are taken by torchlight and abandoned a minute or two's walk from the house, sometimes but not always at a cross-roads. The objects, which may

have been associated with the banana trunk or may be specially made at this point, are often carried on a winnowing fan which is retained. They include model animals, made from potatoes or the like, with splinters for legs, charcoal drawings,[12] leaf plates of various grains (*satabiu palabiu*, cf. *biu*, N, 'seed'), nail scrapings, thread crosses. There is a certain feeling that they are *jemadān* (N), offerings to Yama, god of the dead. The *jhākri* may or may not accompany the procession and there may be a small rite at its furthest point, e.g. four lumps of cactus are buried, a peg (*kilo*, N) of *kāg-bhalāyo* (N) wood is hammered into the earth, a hen's egg is thrown at a stone.

The whole act is sometimes called *graha khaḍgo sārnu* (N), 'shifting the evil star', and it is said that it can be performed equally by Brahman, *sādhu*, Jogi or *jhākri*. An alternative form of the act I met performed only by Thulung *jhākri*. The banana tree is replaced by a tall bamboo (*lingo*, N) planted outside the house, and the manufactured cotton thread by a hand-made ritual rope (*yachiri*, as distinct from the mundane *riwa*), which passes from the summit of the bamboo through a hole made in the roof of the house down to the drying frame *(chakkar)* which is suspended over the fire.

Two other acts may be briefly mentioned. The raising of the head (*sir uṭhāunu*, N) is typically performed on a couple who squat holding their sexes' weapons (*kukri*, N, and sickle) and may be given *raksi* to drink. While the officiant invokes deities by beating a brass plate, assistants hold over the couple's heads a cock or hen and/or plates with candles on them. To the cry of *sarara* these are raised in the air three times. Flowers are tucked under the couple's headwear. The fowl are killed by a blow on the back and then eaten. In one case, after raising the head of the householders, the *jhākri* proceeded to 'raise the head of the house', sprinkling cock's blood at the four corners outside to the accompaniment of blasts on a human thigh-bone trumpet.

Another manoeuvre might be thought of as the 'materialization' of the evil force by means of the *phurke*. Sometimes the *jhākri* moistens the *phurke* in the gluey *khasku* and dances waving it above his head. Sometimes he uses the *phurke* to extract the evil from the patient's body. In either case the materialized evil is represented by a small particle of indeterminate mineral or organic origin which is placed on a plate and handed round amid congratulatory cries of *syābās* (N) or *oalaseo*. In some instances the particle appears to be picked up by chance in the course of the movements of the *phurke*. On one occasion the *jhākri* failed to extract anything from a girl, even after six attempts at various parts of the body, using quills and feathers as well as his *phurke*. The particle may be drowned in the *kalas* or transferred to a stoppered bamboo tube which is burnt; but the audience is much less interested in this final destruction than in the extraction

or capture, i.e. the materialization.

At the end of the séance, the *jhãkri* takes leave of his divinities. In principle, especially in a proper full-scale séance, this is somewhat after dawn, though not all séances last so long. There does not seem to be any generally recognized order for the acts in the middle of the séance. A sequence at Lokhim ran: cutting the road, raising the head of householders and house, meal (including cock used in the preceding act), magical journey, extraction of materialized evil from patients. The patients may have parts of their treatment left over after the séance, for instance to make some specified sacrifice, or to put on a new amulet which the *jhãkri* will prepare. The benefits of the séance may be felt only after weeks or months.

Though the nocturnal séance is the characteristic activity of the *jhãkri*, he may also conduct daytime rites in which there is no question of possession or of danced mystical journeys, for instance sacrifices to the forest deity Mankime or to the various spirits who may harm livestock. He may also build a *thān* and attempt exorcism of humans and animals without sacrificing. He conducts the burial of the bad dead in an area of dense jungle away from habitations, and I met one instance of a *jhãkri* assisting a priest for a portion of the ordinary death ritual. But outside séances, his most interesting activities are perhaps at the periodical gatherings which are usually referred to as *bajār* or *melā* (N), rather than by the slightly more precise term *jātrā* (see descriptions by Macdonald 1966a:47-8, 1972:76ff, Fournier 1973a:166, revised in this volume). These 'fairs' are held at a number of recognized sites close to a shrine. The main one in the Thulung area is Jalin Bazaar which is held on the ridge above Dewsa, where the village panchayat has recently built a prominent stone building. Crowds assemble towards evening and pass the night dancing and drinking, milling around the temporary stalls. The occasion has a reputation for sexual licence, but if it occurs it is nowadays very discrete. *Jhãkri* dance their way through the crowds and in the morning groups make their way up to the lake on the forested ridge top to wash and pay their respects (*darsan*, N) at the small walled shrines close by it. First one should worship Sikāri at the base of a boulder, then with the offering of a small trident, Seti Devi, whose enclosure is at the mouth of a cave. The fair takes place at full moon (*purne*, N) in Baisakh, Sāun, and on a smaller scale, Mangsir.[13] I have no instances of *jhãkri* gatherings being held in other months, though a given site does not necessarily have one on each of the three occasions. A large fair, attended by Thulung (as well as other castes) is held at Dudh Kund to the north; it was described as the eldest (*jeṭhi*, N) in a series where Jalim came second, Salpa (to the east) third, and the youngest (*kānchi*, N) was not identified. Other fairs are held at Halesi thrice yearly, near Lodin at least in Mangsir, and at Caiya (or Chuiya) at least in Sāun.[14] Some sites are of no

great antiquity. A few years ago, the Thulung *jhãkri* Mango of Lokhim discovered (*khluk* - literally 'extract' i.e. from the earth) a stone representing Sitā Puri Gayā Nāni, and founded Sayebeni Bazaar, which is celebrated not far from the village on the same dates as Jalim Bazaar. Such discoveries do not necessarily attract or retain popular support. At Kulāmohon (for *-muhān*, N) above Mukli the remains are visible of a shrine founded by local *jhãkri* less than a decade ago, but it seems that no gathering any longer takes place. During the last ten years there has been a great increase in the number of regular weekly bazaars run by village panchayats, and it is possible that those founded by *jhãkri* suffer in consequence.

There seems to be no open bargaining nor any fixed conventional rate, but the *jhãkri* can expect at least a fee of two or three rupees and a rice meal in the evening or morning; for a full séance he may get five rupees and two meals. He will also take the rice on the brass plates on the *thān* and any beer from the gourds. However, he would not be paid for divinations or minor exorcisms. If he is successful he may, like Baginanda in Kathmandu, receive an occasional windfall; Simbure was proud of a woollen waistcoat presented by a grateful Gurung client. Baunne claimed to perform séances some 20-25 nights a month, and Najure Pap of Lokhim, about 12. These figures seem on the high side and would certainly not apply during the busy agricultural months of the summer, though there is no absolute closed season for séances (as there is for most of the priest's rites). Incidentally a *jhãkri* may hold a séance in his own house, as Simbure did on the night of Jalim Bazaar. Whatever his average income from it, being a *jhãkri* is regarded as a part-time activity, and it would not occur to anyone that it could be someone's sole means of livelihood, on a par with government service or schoolmastering. It is a vocation, and may be difficult to resign. To do so would be to risk the anger of one's possessing deities.

This account of shamanism in the Thulung area is incomplete in many respects, even read in conjunction with Allen (1974b). I would emphasize again that the activities of the priest have deliberately been excluded, although they could well be called shamanic, and although in other areas no doubt the same activities are performed by a *jhãkri*. This has meant excluding all rituals held on behalf of the collectivity (e.g. *bhume*, N, 'agricultural rites'), or related to the normal life cycle. I have also omitted certain rituals that may be performed by either officiant, e.g. the *huṭpa* rite and certain minor sacrifices, and the method of divination by slicing ginger. That still leaves many gaps due to lack of knowledge. I was never on close terms with an officiant, and attempts to collect dictated texts failed. It was only towards the very end of my stay that I began to sense the possibility of drawing a distinction, which is hardly apparent to informants, between *jhãkri* traditions widespread in

the recent Nepāli-speaking world and another cluster of traditions, better preserved in Lokhim, and closer in character to the classical central Asiatic shamanism of Eliade. If this distinction, or better perhaps, this polarity, is confirmed, it is the second pole with its emphasis on mystic journeys rather than possession, that is the more urgently in need of recording.

Nicholas Allen

1. During 1969-71, seventeen months were spent in Thulung villages. I gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Social Science Research Council and the encouragement of Professor C. von Fürer-Haimendorf and Dr. R. Needham.

2. In using the term 'caste' to render Nepāli *jāt* and therefore to include 'tribes', I consciously ignore a distinction that, useful as it is, particularly in historical contexts, is alien to local thinking.

3. Nepāli words or expressions are labelled with a following 'N' on first mention. Thulung words are unlabelled.

4. It seems that before the coming of the literate religions, the distinction between tribal priest and medium (to use a more neutral term than *jhākri*) was to be found among many of the tribal peoples of Nepal, and that it can still be recognized in the offices of the Gurung *gyabring* (*klihbri* or *khepre*) and *poju* (*pucu* or *pajuu*), Mewa Khola Limbu *phedangma* and *yaba*, western Tamang *lambu* and *bombo*. The evidence is discussed in Allen (1974b), which on many points is complementary to the present paper. Further evidence is available in Höfer (1971 and 1972), Sagant (1973b) and Fournier (1973b, revised in this volume).

5. The present rendering departs considerably from the grammatical structure of the Thulung original, but I hope to present elsewhere a transcription of the tape-recording as a linguistic text. The social situation of the various narrators referred to will also be treated elsewhere; none were themselves officiants. Except for tree names, which have been translated into Nepāli, the Nepāli words given are present in the original texts.

6. The Thulung name for the tree in K's account is *moasa*. This is probably a dialectal variant of *moso*, a branch of which is used in the Tingla *dedam* rite: the patient's toes are connected by a special ritual cord *(bor)* to the branch, which amid tremendous noise the priest taps with a knife and to which he makes offerings of beer, rice, and a spray of ginger directed from the mouth. One is reminded of the rite observed by Hitchcock (1967:153-4) in which the patient's foot was moved from notch to notch along a small piece of wood, apparently a miniature cosmic tree.

   Conceivably the location of the tree at Para, a place not otherwise of any particular significance to the Thulung, might be due to the similarity of the name to the morpheme *pāri* mentioned earlier.

7. The following account is based on some eleven of these rites observed in whole or more often in part. They may be roughly classified as follows. (i) Full standard séances: one at Tingla by a Gharti, three at Lokhim by different Thulung *jhākri*, two at Mukli by Kami (one by Baunne, one by a Dewsa villager). (ii) Abbreviated standard séance by Simbure, who claimed that he could not perform the full ceremony without ritually-prepared beer, which was not available. (iii) 'Large séance' by a Mukli Thulung following the death of an infant; but the scale was much smaller than as described to me under that name. (iv) Three séances without dancing or use of *ḍhyāṅgro*: one by Simbure, one by another Mukli Thulung, one by another Mukli Kami. In addition, one 'head-raising' rite in Mukli, perhaps misclassified as a séance.

8. In the latter case, when as sometimes there are frills at both ends situated on either side of a joint in the bamboo, one cannot escape being reminded of the form of the Tibetan *rDo-rje*. They do not seem to be used by Thulung priests, and conversely I never saw a *jhākri* use a yak's tail, though some priests do. The Thulung for *phurke* is *hiwnen*, 'house of the *hiw* (evil spirit)'.

9. An officiant in the Khaling village of Jubing had a polished stone axe head which he claimed to have found locally.

10. A specimen given me consists of a band 30 inches long by ¾ inch high, from which hang 50 two-inch-long tassels also of wool and fibre. In addition, from strings fixed at each end of the band, two bundles of eight tassels hang halfway down the back as a queue *(campuri)*. Perhaps the fringe is to be regarded as a sort of mask (cf. Eliade 1964:167).

11. I hope to consider elsewhere in more detail the ritual language which, apart from some particular phrases, the Thulung *jhãkri* share with the priests. As an example here, we may take the term for drum, which appears in the invocation together with other items of the paraphernalia. The term is *holosam camcosam deoresam breksiusam*, where *-sam*, literally 'breath', refers to the sound, and the other elements refer respectively to the wood (*lāmpāte* and *malayāgiri?*) and then the skin (of deer and wild goat).

12. One example showed nine objects: sun and moon, anthropomorphic figure with trident, crab, butterfly, buffalo, and ? lizard, bird and snail. Others say an elephant and horse should be included.

13. The lunar calendar used in ritual contexts (in which dates are called *tithi*, N) only roughly coincides with the every-day solar calendar (where dates are expressed with *gate*, N). Thus Baisākh *purne* (lunar) may fall in Jeṭh (solar) and Sāun *purne* is often in Bhadau. To add to potential confusion, calendars written by different pundits do not necessarily agree. It should be noted that there are also fairs at which *jhãkri* do not assemble, e.g. those held below Mukli at Borku on the eleventh of the bright half of Kartik *(Ekādasi melā)* and on the last day (*saṅkrānti*, N) of Magh.

14. Caiya Bazaar is held on an apparently waterless knoll at the northwest end of Neche *ḍãḍā*. The stone representing the deity stands on a squared cairn which one circumambulates, crowded within the stone walls of a rectangular enclosure. Beside it stood a forty-foot Tibetan prayer flag. I was struck here by the coordinated, apparently rehearsed dancing of one pair of *jhãkri*.

VIII

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON SHERPA SHAMANISM

On the basis of observations made by me and my colleague, Sherry Ortner, in the Shorung region of Solu-Khumbu, home of the Sherpas, during fieldwork done in 1966-68, I would say that Sherpa shamanism is in a severe state of decline. The reasons for this fact must be sought by placing the institution in the context of a broader cultural framework, in which it will be seen that most of the distinctive features of shamanism have been successfully divided up among other competing institutions, and what remains is losing favour because of the general trend of the development of Sherpa culture in contemporary times.

In discussing shamanism among the Sherpa, who belong to the Tibetan culture area, it is necessary to distinguish between the term shamanism used in the broad sense to refer to any sort of healing complex employing supernatural contact either through spirit possession or soul journey on the one hand; and on the other hand the specific religious pattern characteristic of most indigenous peoples of North and Central Asia involving a certain definable set of ideas, practices, and symbols, as described by Eliade (1964).

The latter, which for brevity I will refer to as classical shamanism, played a major historical role in the formation of Tibetan culture, and the historical relationship between classical shamanism, the Bon religion, the Buddhism of the Guru Rimpoche, and modern Tibetan Buddhism is a vast and complex problem which I will only touch on briefly here. But though the Sherpa are Tibetan in origin, they have lived in Nepal for four hundred years, and especially in the more southerly Shorung region, they have been directly influenced by neighbouring local Nepali cultural traditions.

It is important, therefore, to point out at the outset that most of the shamanizing which is done for Sherpa patients and supported by Sherpa sponsors in Shorung is actually done by shamans from non-Sherpa castes. Just as Sherpa employ Nepali service castes to sew and smith for them, they also bring in outside specialists on many occasions when as shamanistic cure is in order, employing Chetri, Newar or other caste shamans living within the Sherpa area. This accounts for a good deal of the shamanizing that goes on in Sherpa villages, but may in no way be described as Sherpa shamanism. It is performed in Nepāli, employing a set of cultural ideas which

are not Sherpa in origin.

Furthermore, some of the ideas and symbols from these non-Sherpa Nepali groups have found their way into Sherpa practice as well, so that what Sherpa shamanism there is contains ideas which are both Tibetan and Nepali in origin.

As a healing technique, indigenous Sherpa shamanism has to compete not only with imported Nepali shamanism, but with several other healing techniques. Western medicine is making important inroads, and commands widespread and perhaps somewhat exaggerated respect from the Sherpa, thanks to its effective administration by various mountaineering and scientific expeditions, and especially through the efforts of Sir Edmund Hillary.

Western medicine is not, however, necessarily understood by the Sherpa to be in direct competition with other healing techniques. It is recognized that medicine cures symptoms, but that the causes of many diseases are purposeful supernatural agents, or the conscious or unconscious agencies of other people, and that in such cases, medicine can only relieve the physical damage they do, not eliminate or foil the intentions which are at the root of the illness. For this, some form of supernatural cure is required. In general, the Sherpa attitude in this particular regard is to try as many cures as possible, and let a hundred flowers bloom.

But in the realm of supernatural curing itself, Sherpa shamanism has to compete with a variety of techniques which fall within the doctrinal confines of the Sherpa religion, the Sang-Ngak (Secret Formula) branch of the Nying-ma-wa (Old One) sect of Tibetan Buddhism. These include: medicines prepared and bestowed with religious power by high or reincarnate *lāmā*, or by *lāmā* doctors according to Tibetan medical lore; doctrinal curing rituals with written texts which may be chanted by monks, nuns, or married *lāmā*; and religious rituals which are known and performed by laymen with some knowledge of the religious texts.

There is also a native herbal lore which can be used to effect cures. Some laymen are thought to have special powers such that herbs administered by them will be more effective than the same thing taken by the patient alone.

Not only the healing functions but also various other duties often undertaken by shamans, such as divination, finding lost objects, and identifying malefactors, can also be accomplished in Sherpa culture by *lāmā*, or by laymen with a little religious training, (which most have had) or by traditional simple ritual techniques, such as divining with rosary beads.

As a final note on the erosion of shamanism in Sherpa culture, it is essential to mention that the central feature of classical shamanism, the journey to the land of the dead, either in the sky or

under ground, and its attendant symbolism, has been almost completely incorporated long ago within the formal doctrine of the Tibetan Buddhist religion. What used to be the spontaneous ecstatic experience of a single individual became formalized into a ritual embodied in texts and capable of being evoked through recitation in an institutional religious context. This is accomplished through ceremonies which may once have been shamanistic, but now take place in a Buddhist context, and in a context not related to curing.

There is a separate institutionalized role in Sherpa culture, that of the *da lo ma* (hell-returned-female one, i.e., woman who has been to hell and back), who may be a lay woman, who undergoes the classic shamanic voyage, and has extraordinary knowledge bestowed on her, as well as becoming a receptacle of merit for the community. She differs from a shaman, however, in that her voyage occurs once, while she appears to be really dead, and is not voluntarily repeatable. The role of *da lo ma* is often equated by Sherpa with the supernatural category of *kang do ma* (sky-going-female one), the Dakini of Indian lore who play a major role in meditation as mediators between earth and heaven. Many Sherpa Buddhist rituals in the monastic setting involve the effort through textual recitation, visualization, the wearing of appropriate costumes, and the performance of the fire sacrifice, (which has origins in Iranian culture and the shamanic comples), to achieve an identification of the celebrant with the *kang do ma*. In both cases, an idea which is clearly shamanic in the classical sense has been institutionalized in such a way that it is no longer the prerogative of the shaman.

Along the same lines, it may be mentioned that the Tibetan Buddhist idea of the reincarnate *lāmā*, the saint or Bodhisattva who is reborn over and over to fulfill his mission on earth, can be interpreted as yet another symbolic transformation of the shamanic conception of the religious virtuoso who goes through the experience of death, journeys to the land of the dead, survives the physical destruction of his body, and returns to life triumphant over death and with special powers. The reincarnate *lāmā* accomplishes this feat not through ecstatic soul flight, but by actually dying and being reborn as an infant, but one with charismatic authority. The Sherpa reincarnate *lāmā* may posses special healing powers, divining powers, power to converse with supernaturals, and power to identify miscreants, thus once again clearly encroaching on the traditional domain of the shaman.

The many other ideas and symbols in modern Tibetan Buddhism which are clearly related to shamanism - the drum, the winged horse of good luck, the rope slide, the skeleton dance, the *chod* ceremony in which the body is offered to cannibal demons - these and others are well enough known not to require further discussion here.

Notwithstanding all these cautionary remarks, however, a separate clear and distinct Sherpa category corresponding to the shaman still survives, though threatened on every hand as I have described. There is in Sherpa culture the role of a non-clerical curer who heals by entering into trance or altered state in the course of which he journeys to the other world, manages to make direct contact with the gods for purposes of discovering the supernatural source of illness and its possible cure, and may also exhibit other oracular powers. Such a person may be known in Sherpa as *hla-wa* (God One); *min-dung* (corruption of mik-tong, to see with the eyes); or *pen-bu* (Bon-po, practioner of the Bon religion, the pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet, still surviving in some ares of Nepal, and identified by the sherpas with shamanism).

In the valley in which I worked, populated by several hundred Sherpas, there were only four *hla-wa* that I knew of, and all of them had given up shamanizing either completely or almost completely. In the same valley, the much smaller Newar and Chetri population produced more shamans whose services were more in demand. Three of the four Sherpa shamans I knew were male, and one was a woman whose distinctive feature seemed to be barrenness. None had ever made a living full time from shamanizing, though one had substantially augmented his income with it. Though I never saw any of them actually perform a cure, I was able to reconstruct some aspects of Sherpa shamanism on the basis of interviews with them. (I did however witness a number of séances by Nepali and Tibetan shamans, both in Shorung and the Khumbu).

The theory of illness on which Sherpa shamanism is based postulates that most disease is visited upon one as a result of offending or neglecting one of the various classes of supernatural beings who populate the Sherpa universe. These supernaturals will withdraw their ill will and hence the cause of the disease if they are propitiated with offerings or sacrifices, or decoyed with scapegoats. The shaman's task is therefore to discover which supernatural agent is at work, and to find out what he wants as the price of granting health to the patient.

Therefore, the shaman's essential skill must be the ability to physically confront the gods, converse with them, and bargain with them. It is this direct contact, this 'seeing with the eyes', that makes the shaman's role distinctive and also troublesome for the Sherpa. It is certainly an abnormal ability to have - and one which *lāmā* may strive for years to achieve through rigorous meditation techniques. The Sherpa say that direct contact with the supernatural for one who is not properly prepared makes one crazy. This can happen to a *lāmā* who dabbles in mystical practices beyond his ability, or may occur because of accidentally seeing a ghost or other low level spirit wandering about.

Shamans have their calling announced to them, usually in their early or middle teens, by a bout of craziness which may last any-

where from a few weeks to two years. In this craziness, the divine manifests itself to them, but in so chaotic and overpowering a way that they are overcome and go mad. But as Eliade has rightly pointed out, a shaman is to be distinguished from a madman in that he has managed to cure himself of his madness, that is, learned to control and not be at the mercy of the divine powers. (See Rinehard's definition article in this volume. Also Hitchcock's article).

Gradually the uncontrolled craziness organizes itself, and the shaman's tutelary god makes his identity known, and instructs him in the techniques of shamanizing. The shaman receives no other instruction except that from his tutelary god. The tutelary god is identified in the cases of which I knew with the Nepali forest god, Ban Jhākri, rather than with any native Sherpa god. This is perhaps the most important aspect of direct Nepali influence on Sherpa religious culture, and I have no plausible explanation for it, other than that Nepali shamanism is a more visible model of a shamanistic complex for the Shorung Sherpa than is their more remote Tibetan heritage, both in time and space. The symbolism of the forest, and its local Nepali god, is consistent with the idea of madness and wildness, since it is said that during their initiatory craziness, shamans take to the forest and behave in a savage or uncivilized manner.

A shaman emerges from his craziness with a personal technique for inducing divine contact, usually made up of elements of Buddhist ritual, and in some cases with Nepali elements as well. Having established contact with his tutelary deity, he can go on through him to be introduced to the other supernaturals with whom he must deal.

The extraordinary power of divine contact is called *ngak*, the word also used to refer to the power which a *lāmā* acquires through a series of initiations, transmitted by a guru and perfected by the reading and contemplation of written texts in conjunction with ascetic practices. *Ngak* is an essential element in any Sherpa religious ceremony, and rituals performed by a *lāmā* or shaman who has lost his *ngak*, as may happen through pollution, are no more effective than just singing and dancing, as the Sherpa nicely put it.

The shaman does not become possessed by the gods: this is precisely the opposite of what happens. Rather than giving up his ego to the gods, the Sherpa shaman attempts to impóse his own will on the gods, to control them rather than being controlled by them. More specifically, he confronts the gods, by inviting them to be his guests in a spiritual house. His altar must thus contain amenities for the gods, including offerings of food and drink, incense, which is pleasing to the gods, and a cushion for them to sit on, represented by cups full of grain. (For more on the symbolism of grain as carpet or seat, see Ortner, 1973).

The shaman sits before the altar with his legs folded. He begins to use whatever is his personal formula for summoning the tutelary god, and accompanies himself on the drum, using the same kind of drum which is used in orthodox Buddhist chanting, but beating it from the back side. (The symbolism of shamanism as the opposite of Buddhism, or anti-Buddhism will concern me in the second section of this paper).

Soon the shaman's legs begin to shake, and it is this shaking which is the key sign of the presence of *ngàk*. Gradually the shaking extends to the whole body. According to my most explicit informant, the dialogue with the god then begins, when the shaking has led the shaman into an altered state of consciousness, with the shaman verbalizing both sides of the exchange. The shaman enters the house he uses to entertain the gods, in the sky or in the forest, welcomes them in, offers them a seat, and gives them food and drink, as one would do with a human guest.

After the appropriate formalities are out of the way, the bargaining begins: the offended god, introduced by the tutelary god, identifies himself and then announces what he is dissatisfied about, and what he would accept as an offering. This is the diagnostic aspect of the session, and the only part done in trance. The shaman can then go on, having learned what offerings are appropriate, to actually make the offering, and to find out if they have been received and have in fact satisfied the god. However, the offerings originate from the sponsor of the ceremony, not form the shaman.

The shaman is paid in grain or cash or both, usually about ten rupees. But judging by the frequency with which Sherpa shamans perform in Shorung, this can't have much impact on their income. Shamanizing is always done at night, after the day's work and when the gods are more accessible, in the house of the sponsor of the ceremony and in the presence of the patient. The members of the family are also present, and it may be argued that it is for them that the ceremony is performed. More often than not, the patient is an infant, a senile person, or a person so sick as to be beyond communication, and so the performance of the ceremony cannot be interpreted to depend on the psychological impact of the cure on the patient himself. Indeed, shamanizing may even be done for sick cows and yaks, which effectively rules out a thesis explaining Sherpa shamanism as a sort of primary psychotherapy for the patient himself.

However, the family of the patient is made to feel by the shaman that it is doing all that can be done, by making offerings to the gods, and also presumably by atoning through sacrifice for whatever guilt they may feel as a psychological reaction to the illness of the relative, toward whom they doubtless have harboured some grudge, ill will, or resentment at some level.

In addition to dealing with disease, shamans may use their contact with the gods to divine, to find lost objects, identify criminals, and perform black magic, such as killing enemies of the sponsor or seducing women for him. These activities obviously require discretion, and shamans made it clear to me that they never explicitly identify criminals too clearly, for fear of getting into trouble. I heard about a monk, a reincarnate *lāmā*, and a *da-lo-ma* all of whom got into trouble by being too certain in identifying evil-doers on the basis of supernatural information. I also heard a Sherpa man swear that if he could find the shaman who had blinded his grandmother, he would send the police after him, so the shamans' fears in this respect are well-founded.

The one shaman I knew who claimed to have been a master of the black arts also claimed to have given it up long since, and refused to be very explicit about his activities. This same shaman claimed to have been able to fly during his séances, and when dealing with refractory deities to do battle with them in midair with his mystical three sided dagger. Fighting with gods or demons may be resorted to by any shaman if a more genteel approach has not worked.

Everything that a shaman does in Sherpa culture can be accomplished by some other means - there is no situation which requires a shaman and nothing else. Diagnosing of illness can be done by traditional folk techniques, or by textual divination; and offerings can be made directly to gods without shamanistic intervention. There is a generalized exorcism ceremony, the *kurim*, which banishes evil influence and malevolent demons from a household in an all inclusive way, and may also be used for any illness. The *kurim* is usually performed by village *lāmā*. Given a choice, the Sherpa preference is definitely for the textual ceremony rather than the shaman. One informant said to me that one can never be sure if a shaman really sees the gods and is really shaking from *ngak*, or whether it is all an act. But in the case of *lāmā*, their *ngak* is certifiable, having been bestowed in an institutionalized way, and their ceremonies conform to the written books, which cannot lie, rather than their own personal whims. It behoves us, therefore, to examine in the next section of this paper the institution of Sherpa shamanism in direct relationship to and contrast with the orthodox Buddhist tradition.

From the Sherpa point of view the shaman is anomolous, because he stands the normal order of things upside down. He is an ordinary layman who has the *ngak* of a mystical master of the doctrine. His life is not guided by any particular formal moral or ethical code, as is the monk's; nor is he considered a receptacle of sacred power or charisma with the ability to bestow merit as an object of worship, as is the case with a reincarnate *lāmā* or *da-lo-ma*. His power is not acquired or used in conjunction with any formal or institutional training or study, nor does it corres-

pond to any high position on any social or religious hierarchy. It is certainly contrary to the Sherpa view of things to have an ordinary fellow wielding such power.

To perfect himself according to Buddhism, a person must submit to universal laws and submerge his personal ego and will in the transcendental and eternal; after having done so, he may emerge as a powerful and meritorious personality, and an appropriate outlet for the divine in society. But a shaman retains his own personality, and attempts to impose his own profane and undisciplined control over the gods (though not over the high gods of the religion who are beyond his reach).

The triumph of Buddhism over shamanism as a historical event in Tibet is conceived of by the Sherpa as not only demonstrating the greater power of the founder of Tibetan Buddhism, the Guru Rimpoche, in terms of sheer *ngak*, but also as representing the discovery of the true moral principles of the universe, and thus being a great step forward in the progress of civilization. Subsequent religious history in the Tibetan culture area consists in the growth of institutions, hierarchies, written texts, in short, the rationalization, not to say routinization, of charisma.

There is a whole body of Sherpa folk lore dealing with competition between Buddhism and shamanism, and the ultimate triumph of Buddhism. Various landmarks in the Solu-Khumbu are sacred shrines representing spots where crucial victories were won by *lāmā* over shamans in tests of strength or religious power. As an example, I may mention a tale associated with a distinctive depression just below the summit of a certain snowy peak.

It is said that a *lāmā*, sometimes identified with the Guru Rimpoche, founder of Tibetan Buddhism, challenged a great shaman to a test of power. They proved to be almost exactly equal in such events as flying, lifting huge rocks, leaving handprints in stone, and the rest. Finally, a mountain climbing race was proposed. The shaman began to climb in the middle of the night, long before dawn. As he climbed, he looked back and saw that the *lāmā* was still in bed asleep. He climbed higher and higher, and as dawn approached, found himself just three paces below the summit. He turned around and saw the *lāmā* still in bed. In his joy over his apparent sure victory, he began to do a dance, causing a depression in the mountain. But as he was engaged in his premature celebration, the dawn came and the sun burst over the mountain peak, sending a sunbeam down to the valley below. The *lāmā*, having arisen, mounted the sunbeam and glided in an instant to the mountain peak, thus finally proving his superiority. By this and other measures, the supercession of shamanism by Buddhism was assured.

The rationalization process is evident in recent Sherpa history. Within the last fifty years, celibate monasticism has been introduced and spread, replacing the earlier system of village-based married *lāmā*, permitted within the rules of the Nying-ma-wa sect. Monasticism is more formal, more rational in Weber's terms, more hierarchical, and more rigorous. Whereas religious virtuosity may once have coincided for the Sherpa with magical power or charisma, which could be had by village *lāmā* or shamans, today it corresponds to obedience to a high number of moral regulations. I have no particular hypothesis to put forward as to why this should be the case, other than that it seems to be the overall direction of the movement of history, as Weber and Hegelians before him pointed out.

The shaman does not fare well in the context of the increased emphasis on distance between the individual and direct religious experience, and the interposition of rule-guided means between a man and ecstasy. The fact that today even monasticism is breaking down in the Solu-Khumbu does not, it seems to me, reverse the trend and pave the way for a rebirth of shamanism, but is rather the result of the even greater process of rationalization brought about by modernization and contact with world culture. However, Sherpa culture will no doubt pass through a period of cultural anomie as monasticism breaks down and before it is replaced by a viable modernized culture integrated into the national life, and it is quite conceivable that during this period there may be outbreaks of ecstatic religious phenomena in one form or another.

The distinction between lamaism and shamanism may be described also in terms of lamaism's orientation towards death and the next life; while shamanism is concerned with health and success in this one. Vital natural energy is enclosed in rules and boundaries in lamaism, and plunged directly into by shamanism. *Lāmā* are concerned with the boundaries of life, shamans with the power of life itself.

Perhaps I can symbolize this dichotomy neatly by pointing out the difference in behaviour between the Sherpa and Rai pilgrims to the Milk Lake, in which lives a powerful wish-granting goddess. The cautious Sherpa gain their merit by circumambulating the lake, that is by walking around the source of power and defining its boundary. The Rai shamans and their followers, on the other hand, jump right into the lake and are shaken with the frenzy of actually being in the source of the divine power. One might say, following Buber's views on religious experience, that orthodox Sherpa Buddhism attempts to establish an I-It relationship with the divine, while shamanism revels in the direct I-Thou confrontation. The I-Thou experience is also present in Sherpa Buddhism, but only after the mediation of formal and rationalized techniques.

Another nice illustration of the difference is captured in the Sherpa saying that a *lāmā's* wife earns sin, and a shaman's wife

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The shaman does not fare well in the context of the increased emphasis on distance between the individual and direct religious experience, and the interposition of rule-guided means between a man and ecstasy. The fact that today even monasticism is breaking down in the Solu-Khumbu does not, it seems to me, reverse the trend and pave the way for a rebirth of shamanism, but is rather the result of the even greater process of rationalization brought about by modernization and contact with world culture. However, Sherpa culture will no doubt pass through a period of cultural anomie as monasticism breaks down and before it is replaced by a viable modernized culture integrated into the national life, and it is quite conceivable that during this period there may be outbreaks of ecstatic religious phenomena in one form or another.

The distinction between lamaism and shamanism may be described also in terms of lamaism's orientation towards death and the next life; while shamanism is concerned with health and success in this one. Vital natural energy is enclosed in rules and boundaries in lamaism, and plunged directly into by shamanism. *Lāmā* are concerned with the boundaries of life, shamans with the power of life itself.

Perhaps I can symbolize this dichotomy neatly by pointing out the difference in behaviour between the Sherpa and Rai pilgrims to the Milk Lake, in which lives a powerful wish-granting goddess. The cautious Sherpa gain their merit by circumambulating the lake, that is by walking around the source of power and defining its boundary. The Rai shamans and their followers, on the other hand, jump right into the lake and are shaken with the frenzy of actually being in the source of the divine power. One might say, following Buber's views on religious experience, that orthodox Sherpa Buddhism attempts to establish an I-It relationship with the divine, while shamanism revels in the direct I-Thou confrontation. The I-Thou experience is also present in Sherpa Buddhism, but only after the mediation of formal and rationalized techniques.

Another nice illustration of the difference is captured in the Sherpa saying that a *lāmā's* wife earns sin, and a shaman's wife

earns merit (an obviously absurd proposition to a Sherpa). The explanation for this conundrum is that women often control household purse strings and are in any case thought to be interested only in material things, such as money. Married *lāmā* are called on to recite prayers whenever there is a funeral in the village, and are paid for their services. Therefore, a *lāmā's* wife hopes that many people will die, a sinful thought, in order for her husband to make a lot of money.

But a shaman makes money from performing cures, and the more successful he is at it, the better a reputation he will have, and the more often he will be called. Therefore a shaman's wife hopes that sick people will recover after her husband's cure, and by such benevolent thoughts accumulates merit. This ironical recognition by the Sherpa themselves of the shaman's association with life and the *lāmā's* with death only acts as a paradoxical sidelight to the fact that *lāmā* are to be taken much more seriously, dealing as they do with serious issues, and that it is more worthy to be concerned about the next life than about this one. After all, the humour of the joke lies in proving by fallacious, but nonetheless valid, logic the truth of an obviously absurd idea.

Along the same lines, I may point out that while it is the norm for a Sherpa to have one wife, both monks and shamans diverge from the norm, but in opposite directions. Whereas the ideal for the monk is celibacy, (the institution of married *lāmā* having fallen into disfavour in recent times), the male shamans that I knew all had been married several times, and one, the one who claimed the greatest powers, held the record as far as I know of having had seven wives in sequence. It thus appears that empirically shamans diverge from the sexual norm through excess rather than restriction, and in this way to go against the mainstream of accepted Sherpa thinking and morality.

I shall conclude this sketch of the process of rationalization of religion among the Sherpa by mentioning that it works not only on a cultural level but also within individual lives. Two of the Shorung shamans I knew had given up shamanizing and become village *lāmā*, and the only son of one had become a monk. One, an older man who practised the black arts in his youth, gave up shamanizing because all but one of his thirteen children had died, some under very bizarre circumstances, and he took this as a sign of supernatural displeasure with his wicked ways. As he began to approach the end of his life, he sacrificed to his god and asked to be released from shamanizing work, and since that time he has devoted himself to meritorious activity, reading texts at village ceremonies, making auspicious charms for people, and refusing to shamanize. He stressed that shamanism in itself is neither good nor evil, but it may be used for ego-centric, this-worldly, and even malicious ends; and while he is proud of his wonder-working

youth, he is seriously concerned about his fate in the next life, and for this he must turn to the orthodox religion. With the waning of life, and the approach of death, wild, ecstatic, personal shamanism gives way to controlled, formal, ethical and universal Buddhism.

Another shaman began shamanizing in his youth after an initial madness, but, because of the pollution entailed in constantly being around sick people, he began to lose his *ngak*, and when he remarried he finally lost his *ngak* altogether. He remained interested in religion, but was too interested in sex to become a monk. Nonetheless, as he got older and brought his life under control, he also brought his religion under control, such that by now his participation is almost entirely formal and textual.

We may thus conclude by reiterating that in the context of the total Sherpa religious situation, shamanism must be seen as one side of a structural dichotomy with lamaism or orthodox Buddhism on the other, representing the different poles of a continuum from ecstatic to formal, personal to universal, sexual to ascetic, this-wordly to other-worldly, and so on. Furthermore, the Buddhist side of this dichotomy is the clear official public position subscribed to by almost everyone in the culture. Although the opposite side of the picture is also there, and forms the root of Sherpa shamanism, it is being driven underground by rationalization in the form of both routinization of religion and the process of modernization, and we should not be very surprised, though we may be saddened, if Sherpa shamanism soon becomes a thing of the past.

Robert A. Paul

PART II
SPIRIT POSSESSION IN WESTERN NEPAL

Bhujel Matwala Khas shamans being questioned when speaking for Dakkin Devi

IX

NOTES ON THE JHÃKRI OF ATH HAJAR PARBAT/ DHAULAGIRI HIMALAYA

This contribution is based on data collected in the Dhaulagiri area in 1971-72.[1] Although shamanism[2] was not the focus of the research, I had the opportunity to observe three séances completely and about half a dozen in part, and could interview three Chantel *jhãkri* and one Kami *jhãkri*. All the séances I observed were performed by Kumma Siha Chantel of Kuinekhani village who has achieved an outstanding position among the shamans of this region and most information was obtained from him. But before giving an outline of the complex, a brief description of the Chantel of Ath Hajar Parbat will be useful.[3]

The Chantel, with a population of about 5,000, are one of the smallest groups among the Tibeto-Burmese population in Nepal. In the minds of their neighbours they are closely associated with their former occupation: they were exclusively engaged in copper mining. Although they started some agriculture around 1900, the definitive change took place in 1930-31, when the government closed the copper mines. Except for a short survey by C. Jest, no research has been done among the Chantel.[4] They are often referred to by their neighbours as Magar and appear as such in the Census and other reports. This may be due to the fact that those Chantel who enlist in the Indian or British Armies adopt the name Pun (a Magar sub-tribe), because the Magar have an excellent reputation as soldiers.

Nearly all my information on shamanism was obtained from the eastern Chantel of Ath Hajar Parbat. This region is bordered by the Myagdi Khola to the South and West, the Dhaulagiri Range to the North, and the Kali Gandaki to the East. In the lower parts of the hills there are mostly Magar settlements, some Jaisi Brahman and Chetri and a few Kami, Sarki and Damai. In the higher regions there are only Chantel villages (between 6,000 and 8,500 ft.) which always include some Kami households. Since most of the Thakali merchants have left the region because trade with the Chantel was no longer profitable after the closing of the mines, there are almost no interethnic relations between the Chantel of Ath Hajar Parbat and the surrounding castes and ethnic groups. Today all Chantel can be considered settled agriculturalists, but because of the environmental conditions we can also speak of a

transhumant pattern to some extent. After harvesting, cows and buffaloes are herded near the village to graze on the fields. During the rest of the year they are moved to different grazing areas every 6-8 weeks. The highest grazing land (10-12,000 ft.) is used in monsoon time. Each family establishes its own temporary cattle shed made out of bamboo mats, and one or two persons take care of the herd. Sometimes a cattle shed can be as far as two days' walk and small families will leave the village to stay there. Because of the grazing pattern between 25-50% of the inhabitants live outside the village for most of the year.

Potatoes, maize, barley, wheat and buckwheat (the bitter variety) are the main food crops. Millet is grown only in a few villages and is of a poor quality. Paddy is purchased in a bazaar or obtained in exchange for bamboo mats or baskets, or potatoes (the only cash crop), and is only used during festivals and other special occasions. Hemp *(Cannabis sativa)* grows wild in the forests and fields but only during the last few years, when traders began to collect hashish in the Chantel region, has this plant become a small source of income. In the past twenty years the number of Chantel enlisting in the Indian or British armies has increased steadily and nearly 10% of the households get cash through pensions or pay brought home by soldiers on leave.

The Chantel emphasize that they have never had any leader. Before the Panchayat system was introduced here, the *mukhiyā* (headman) and the *caudhari* (deputy headman) of a village, as in the greater part of Nepal, were responsible for tax collection. Both positions were inherited from father to son but apparently they were never as important as they were in the purely agricultural regions. Decisions still are made by the village assembly and the influence of the elected Panchayat members is not very significant.

The Chantel claim to be Hindus but it is obvious that they are less influenced by Hinduism than their nearest neighbours, the Northern Magar (mostly Pun). In interrelations with the Kami they strictly observe the regulations of the Nepali caste system regarding commensality, but are less concerned about touchability: in one case I could even observe the participation of a Kami (a soldier in the Indian Army on leave) at the cremation of a Chantel.[5] The Kami participate in many of the feasts and religious ceremonies and it is not unusual to see the Chantel *jhākri* praying together with a Kami on the occasion of a *pūjā* for the welfare of the village. Among the deities worshipped by the Chantel only a few belong to the 'classic' Hindu pantheon; local deities such as Bhume, Bāra and Siddha are more important. Witches *(boksi, dāini)*, goblin- or demon- like beings (*bir, masān*, etc.) and spirits of the dead *(moc, pret, siyo)* play a dominant role in the religious life of the Chantel. There are no temples in the Chantel region of Ath Hajar Parbat; only some bushes with a small shrine made of

some stone plates and decorated with cotton strips or occasionally with a small bell to indicate the places of the gods.

The Chantel claim to employ Brahman for every important life-cycle ceremony such as birth, marriage and death, but during my six months' stay, Brahman performed sanskritic rites in a Chantel village only once (on the occasion of the death of a Chantel woman, the mother of a District Assembly member). Only a few Chantel own a *janma pātra* (astrological birth certificate) written by a Jaisi Brahman. In my records about Chantel marriages over the past 60 years, not a single case appears where a Brahman was employed for a wedding-ceremony. Some Chantel claim to be descendants of the Chetri[6] but this opinion is not shared by the majority.

The *jhākri* is the most important religious expert among the Chantel. In Ath Hajar Parbat there are four *jhākri* including one *jharini*[7] (a female shaman). The Kami *jhākri* are more numerous but it is difficult to give the exact number because - as I was told by the Chantel - every Kami is a potential *jhākri* and communicates with ghosts and spirits anyhow. Among the four *jhākri* one Kumma Siha Chantel of Kuinekhani village, has achieved an outstanding position, and he is the only one who can live entirely on his income as a shaman. None of the *jhākri* with whom I was acquainted showed any noticeable psychological characteristics or specific behaviour that was different to others in the community. As I could only record biographical data from two Chantel and one Kami *jhākri* I must emphasize that from such a small sample no general conclusions can be drawn.

Economically the Kami *jhākri* is in a better position than the other 13 Kami households in the village but this is mainly due to the fact that he has the only blacksmith's workshop in the community. His income as a shaman is insignificant but there are indications that those Kami still exercising their traditional blacksmith profession (nearly all Kami in the region are settled agriculturalists nowadays) are more likely to become *jhākri* than others. His father and father's father had been *jhākri* as well, but he emphasized that becoming a *jhākri* is a 'vocation' and is not hereditary.

Padma Lal Chantel became a *jhākri* when he was about 30 years old but he rarely performs séances (about 5-7 per year). He had been *caudhari* and is one of the wealthiest men in the community. Kumma Siha Chantel's reputation as a *jhākri* is excellent and he is also called upon by members of other castes and ethnic groups. He performs at least 50 séances per year but his economic condition is not better than that of an average Chantel.

These three *jhākri* are between 50 and 60 years old and like almost all people of this region have their own land. Chantel *jhākri* can be employed by everybody and Kami *jhākri* are also

called upon by Chantel (in which case the séance will take place on the verandah or outside the house). Although the Chantel and the Kami *jhãkri* deny that this role is hereditary, there is a tendency for it to remain in the same patrilineage (Kumma Siha's father's father, and the Kami *jhãkri*'s father and his father's father were *jhãkri*). Both Chantel *jhãkri* belong to the Kanchibar clan. None of the three *jhãkri* mentioned had served in the army or lived outside Ath Hajar Parbat for a long period. The way in which they became a *jhãkri* is similar and can be best presented in Kumma Siha's own words:[8]

'I started this profession when I was 15 years old. I was in a *goṭh* (cattleshed) up there in the mountains. The *guru* also lives there, in the eastern side of Kuine. During the night when I was sleeping the *guru* entered my body and caused my body to tremble. For some days, because of the sudden change, I felt some pain and was a little bit sick. While I was sleeping I was trembling, and after getting up I was still trembling. After that, still trembling, I went to other places where a *jhãkri basnu* (séance) was going on. Sometimes I also looked after someone's headache, for the pain of the heart and for other troubles. Once somebody recovered from that treatment and from then on everybody called me *'jhãkri'*.

'For two years I worked in the same way that means without playing the *ḍhyāṅro* (drum) . In the third year I started playing the *thāl* (metal disc) which belonged to his father's father who also was a *jhãkri* . After that I made a *pūjā* to the *guru* . After making *pūjā* to the *guru* I waited for the *ḍhyāṅro* and the *gajo* (drumstick; pronounced *gajā* by the Chantel) and continued playing the *thāl*. Once it happened that the *thāl* clashed with a tree covered with creeping plants and got stuck in it . After that I took some *akṣatā* (holy, unbroken rice for offerings), chanted some *mantra* and threw the *akṣatā* on that tree. While throwing *akṣatā* on that tree, it was told that the tree trembled. Because of the god in me, I did not see the tree trembling, but the *murkha* (fool; here used as an expression for all 'ordinary' people at the moment when a *jhãkri* communicates with gods or spirits, also in the meaning of 'ignorant people') told that it (the tree) trembled.

'Then I told them to cut the tree and then those *murkha* cut the tree and I made the frame for the *ḍhyāṅro*. Then, after hunting the *ghoral* (wild goat) and having fixed the skin on the frame I started playing the drum . The *gajā* was also brought on the same day.'

An initiation under the guidance of a teacher *(guru)* as mentioned by Hitchcock (1967:154 ff) and Höfer/Shrestha (1973:1 ff) is unknown among the *jhãkri* of Ath Hajar Parbat. For them the *guru* is identical with the tutelary deity and they deny any initiation by a human being. Kumma Siha admits that he has acquired some knowledge about religion in general through Brahman and Magar but insists that all the ritual techniques and *mantra* were taught in dreams by his spiritual *guru*. Any god or spirit can be a *guru*, and that god who caused a *jhãkri* to tremble for the first time, signifying the beginning of his career, will become his *guru* for his lifetime.

In the case of the three *jhãkri* of Kuinekhani the predisposing experience occurred when they were staying in the *goṭh*, remote places in the forests, the abode of most gods and spirits. The most important parts of their predisposing experiences were similar in all cases: uncontrollable trembling, especially of the head; feeling of light physical sickness (fever, impression that his body was light, but not feeling much pain); conviction that their condition was caused by a specific god or spirit; dreams in which their *guru* gave them orders and taught them *mantra*. This experience always occurs in private and only after successfully performing a séance will the person be recognized as a *jhãkri*. For about two years the neophyte will attend as many séances of other *jhãkri* as possible but there is no established teacher-scholar relation. When I pointed out to Kumma Siha that the techniques used by him were similar to those I could observe elsewhere and asked him whether he had not learned at least the basic techniques of a séance from other *jhãkri*, he answered in the negative and gave me the following explanation: Everything is learned from the *guru* and it was also he who told him to attend séances of other *jhãkri*; the techniques used in séances are similar because all *jhãkri* are brothers and descendants of the First *Jhãkri*, *Māchāpuraṇ* (cf.the Bhujel complex described by Hitchcock in this volume, where the First Shaman is called Rāma).

The *guru* can be called upon at any time; no special offering or preparation is necessary. At the very moment when the *guru* enters the body of the *jhãkri* (through the head, sometimes through the heart) his head begins to shake. When he intends to perform a séance he will put on his *chācāmācā* (costume and equipment of the *jhãkri*), offer some *dhup* (incense; any type of leaves or flowers may be used) to the *guru*, put some ash from the fireplace on his forehead to purify himself, and plant the metal *triśūl* (trident), decorated with red and white cotton strips, beside him. Then he begins to chant the 'main *mantra*'. These 'main *mantra*' vary according to the different *guru*; their major purpose is to improve the communication between *guru* and *jhãkri*. When the *jhãkri* chants *mantra* it is in fact the *guru*

who speaks through him. Kumma Siha's *guru* is Siram[9] (the dumb god of the forests) and therefore he makes no sound but only moves his lips when Siram is speaking through him. With the help of his *guru* the *jhãkri* can also call other gods and they will speak through him. The *jhãkri*'s speech during a séance is called *bakāunu bhāṣā* (*bakāunu* = 'to cause to confess', Turner 1931:413). When communicating with the *jhãkri*, the gods and the *guru* will address him by the term *daṅge* ('*daṅgā-daṅgi*, adj. Overjoyed, ecstatic. *daṅge*, adj. Quarrelsome;' Turner Ibid.:301). The *guru* protects the *jhãkri* against witches (*boksi*, *ḍāini*) and other evil spirits such as *bhut*, *rākṣas*, *pisāc*, etc. In return the *guru* expects strict obedience, and if the *jhãkri* does not obey he will be punished. From time to time the *jhãkri* will offer *dhup* to his *guru*, and it is a compulsory offering at the beginning of a séance.

As to the costume and equipment there are no strict rules for the *jhãkri* of Ath Hajar Parbat. According to Kumma Siha the complete *chācāmācā* is given by the *guru* and he decides what a *jhãkri* needs. The *chācāmācā* is considered the 'robe of the God' and will protect the *jhãkri* against attacks of evil spirits. Two kinds of necklaces are used: *riṭṭhā* (black, shining seeds from a tree) and *rudrācchi ko mālā* ('*rudrācche*,l. *rudrākṣa*, s. A variety of Elaeocarpus, the seeds of which are used for rosaries' Turner Ibid:539). Each necklace should contain 108 pieces or 54, but of all the necklaces I have seen, none had the 'right' number of pieces. (No *jhãkri* could tell me anything about the meaning of these numbers.) On certain occasions Kumma Siha also wears a necklace made out of the skeleton of a snake (which he killed on the order of his *guru*). Other items are also fixed to both necklaces: horns of the *ghoral* (wild goat), teeth of the *sarā* (a kind of deer) and of the wild boar, 8 small bells (brass) and one round big bell, and a *kawadā* (conch shell).

On his left arm Kumma Siha wears a *bholṭo* (a kind of wooden bracelet that protects the hunter's arm against the string of the bow; it is made out of *nyāmal* wood; '*bholṭo*, s. Gauntlet, mailglove.' Turner Ibid.:484). This too protects against evil spirits. *Ḍhyāṅro* and *gajā* (drum and drumstick) are the weapons of the *jhãkri*. The one-sided drum is held with two loosely fixed crossed handles. When being played, both the drum and drumstick are moved. The skin of the drum must be from a *ghoral*, preferably from a male animal; this must be replaced every 2 or 3 years. Besides the *ḍhyāṅro*, a metal disc called a *thāl* (usually a brass plate) is also used by some *jhãkri*. (I was told that a *thāl* is generally used in the Pokhara region). The use of the *triśūl* has already been mentioned. For a séance the *jhãkri* wears clean clothes, the same as his ordinary ones: *bolo* (cloth forming a sack on the back and crossed at the chest) and a short *lungi*. Both pieces can be made of cotton or *phuwa* (nettle-cloth).

In comparison to the shamanism in the neighbouring Bhuji Khola - Nishi Khola region presented by Hitchcock (1967; 1974), shamanism in Ath Hajar Parbat is less influenced by the 'classic Inner Asian tradition'[10]; there is no headgear at all and no feathers or other signs of flight in the costume. Skin and horns of the wild goat, the bells and to some extent the 'climbing plants' mentioned in Kumma Siha's account point to an Inner Asiatic tradition, but the *jhãkri* of this region are not aware of its origin. *Triśūl, rudrācchi ko mālā* and conch shell indicate the influence of northern India.

Ecological conditions in Ath Hajar Parbat are rather hostile to human existence; the micro-climate of Dhaulagiri is well known because of its rapid and violent change. Hailstorms with hail-stones up to the size of a chicken egg destroy the harvest; whole flocks of sheep and goats are killed by lightning; heavy rain transforms the steep mountain trails into small steams, taking away the thin layer of fertile soil and causing land-slides. Leopards living in the large forests surrounding the villages kill sheep, goats and even small cows and buffaloes. In the night jackals *(siyāl)* come into the village and take away chickens. The Chantel believe that all these troubles are caused by angry gods or evil spirits. One of the tasks of the *jhãkri* is to find the cause of these troubles and to appease the gods and spirits. In most cases he will fix a date for a *pūjā* which at least one member of each household should attend. The costs for such a *pūjā* will be shared by the whole village. For such kind of service the *jhãkri* does not receive any compensation; it is for the welfare of the village.

His main task, however, is to diagnose difficulties of indivi-duals of families who call upon him for help, and to kill or drive away harmful ghosts and spirits by the use of various magical techniques. The *jhãkri* does not hold regular sessions; if a client needs his service he will go to the *jhãkri*, inform him of his difficulties and give his own opinion on their source. Then they will agree on a date for a séance (always performed at night). Payment is arranged after the séance; it depends on how long a séance lasts, and that cannot be known in advance. The charge also depends upon the financial situation of the client (according to Kumma Siha), varying from 3 to 20 Rupees. The *jhãkri* also receives one meal and one *mānā* of rice (poor people may give maize or buckwheat).

At the end of the séance when the *jhãkri* has found the cause of the trouble through his contact with the supernatural world he tells the client which measures are necessary to appease the angry gods or to kill or drive away the evil spirits. In most cases a small offering is necessary and this is performed immediately after the séance or during it under the guidance of the *jhãkri*. Sometimes two or more gods or spirits may cause

trouble and then they must each be given an offering. There is no questioning of the client or a relative by the *jhãkri* during the séance; nor are they ever possessed by spirits. If the client is not satisfied he can seek another *jhãkri* but only after carrying out the first *jhãkri*'s recommendations. For the killing of a *siyo* (spirit of an adult person who died an unnatural death) several sessions are necessary, sometimes over a period of several years; and for *siyo mārne* (*siyo* killing) the same *jhãkri* always is employed. The following description of *siyo mārne* may serve as an example of a typical séance in Ath Hajar Parbat (cf. the account of a similar 'killing' in the following essay by Hitchcock).

In 1966 P.P.'s son (30 years old) had fallen from a tree and died. His soul could not go to *swarga* (heaven) and soon it began to trouble P.P.'s family; a cow died shortly afterwards and P.P. himself became ill.[11] Kumma Siha was called and tried to kill the *siyo* but after some time the trouble started again and in 1968 a second séance had to be held. After that it seemed that the *siyo* was killed, but at the end of 1971 two persons of a neighbouring family suffered from permanent headache and they told P.P. that this was caused by his son's *siyo*. At the same time several of P.P.'s chickens died so he decided to call Kumma Siha again. On the arranged day P.P.'s house was cleaned with a mixture of clay and cow-dung. Kumma Siha came to the house at about nine o'clock and had his evening meal there. P.P. presented one *mānā* of rice and some small coins in a brass plate to the *jhãkri* and a *diyo batti* (small butter lamp) was lit in honour of Kumma Siha's *guru*. Then the *jhãkri* put on his equipment, squatted before the fire-place (normally P.P.'s own place), and, already shaking his head, put some ashes on his forehead and threw some flowers into the fire (an offering for the *guru*). He put the drum very near the the fire, turning it from one side to the other, then held it before his face like a mirror[12] and began to move his lips (that means he spoke the 'main *mantra*' in the 'dumb language'). Suddenly his body began to shake violently, thus causing the bells fixed in the necklaces to tinkle; he started drumming and sang a song in Nepāli, mixed with expressions in Chantel and words of 'other languages'.[13] Sometimes he jumped up, dancing around in a small circle without stopping his drumming. After about twenty minutes he suddenly stopped, asked for a cigarette and wanted to hear parts of the séance on the tape recorder. He readily answered our questions and talked in a very normal way with P.P. about the weather and the winter crops.[14] Nobody (except the anthropologist) mentioned the *siyo* or asked questions concerning the séance. After about ten minutes Kumma Siha started performing again, with the same intervals as before, and this continued for several hours. At about two o'clock he informed us that his *guru* had found the *siyo* with the help of several other gods and that he was roaming around P.P.'s house. In order to drive the *siyo* away he went around the house three times, drumming violently and singing very loudly. At about four o'clock he announced that the *siyo* was

fixed in a bush near the school and he went there with P.P. and one of his sons.

About a hundred yards from the bush, just beside a crossroad, P.P. dug a small hole and put in a hollow bottle-shaped gourd containing some milk.[15] A used *kuco* (a broom, made out of a special grass) was fixed upright in the hole and the *jhãkri* began to talk to the *siyo* in the bush, telling him that there would be good food and nice presents for him in the gourd. Before, he had given P.P. a big wooden hammer made of *parākā* wood and painted with charcoal and *besar* (turmeric) and had instructed him to strike the container when he would shout, 'shaaaa...'. At the right moment P.P. destroyed the gourd and the *jhãkri* examined the remaining parts. He found some dead insects, an indication that the *siyo* was killed.[16] Then P.P. dug another hole, slaughtered a small goat in the name of the *guru* and all the gods that had helped him and poured some blood into the hole. The broken gourd (together with the 'dead *siyo*') and the broom were put into this hole and then everything was covered with soil. To prevent the *siyo* from living again and leaving the hole, Kumma Siha planted a *halo* (main part of of the wooden plough) in the hole and four big nails around it. The goat was taken home and Kumma Siha got his share together with his pay (17 Rupees).

One of the most frequent sources of trouble are *boksi* (witches). In the village of Kuinekhani (about 450 inhabitants) nine women between the ages of 22 to 73 are believed to be *boksi* but people only talk about *boksi* in secret. They have supernatural powers, their 'spirit' leaves the body in the night and troubles other people especially those in their own village, mainly small children and pregnant women. If the *jhãkri*'s diagnosis shows the cause of the trouble to be a *boksi* he always speaks of *boksi* in general without giving any details. During a séance the *jhãkri* never mentions the names of living persons, thus avoiding social conflicts that might result from his diagnosis and have consequences for himself as well.

Quite frequently people are troubled by a bad *graha* (constellation of the stars) or *dasā* (lit.: 'condition, state') and they will consult the *jhãkri* to get relief. In such a case no séance is necessary; for a bad *graha* or *dasā* the *jhãkri* has two possible ways to help his clients: a) with the help of his *guru* he may find out which offerings have to be given to the *graha* (considered as gods) to appease them; b) he will give a *jantra* (amulet, charm) to the client that should protect him. Usually girls wear at least one *jantra* around the neck, consisting of a small cotton or metal container.[17] Inside there is some holy rice, a piece of metal (any kind may be used) or a piece of paper with some *mantra* written on it by the *jhãkri*. It is very important that the *jantra* is always in contact with the body. The metal containers for the *jantra* are manufactured by the Kami. For a bad *graha* or *dasā* a

Jaisi Brahman may also be consulted but in general the Chantel prefer their *jhãkri*: - he speaks their own language and also his services are less expensive.

The services done for the community as a whole have already been mentioned: finding an auspicious day to move from one grazing area to another, organizing a *pūjū* in the case of drought, landslides, etc. When no Brahman is available the *jhãkri* is also consulted for questions regarding death-ceremonies, birth, pollution, etc. However, when a name for a child has to be selected or an astrological birth certificate is needed, people will go to see a Jaisi Brahman in the lower villages. Curing by saying spells or blowing ashes, or divining by throwing grains of rice is not done by the *jhãkri* but by Kami curers.

According to their tradition the Chantel have never had any leader and my investigation revealed that Chantel society is rather egalitarian. Even after the introduction of the Panchayat system decisions are made only by the traditional village assembly having one male member from each household and the influence of the elected Panchayat members remains insignificant. (The problem of dependence on Thakali merchants cannot be treated here.) As every aspect of daily life, economic, social, etc., is based on the religious background, the opinion of the religious specialist is the most important. Although the *jhãkri* in Ath Hajar Parbat does not act as a leader, he is in fact a very important adviser. I must admit, however, that this is more true for Kumma Siha, than the other Chantel or Kami *jhãkri* of Ath Hajar Parbat who play only secondary roles. In quarrels between distinct groups or individuals he tries to 'depersonalize' the conflict and blame it on 'impersonal' spirits as much as possible.[18] He fulfills this task, as well as his services to the whole community, while remaining in the background. He could be characterized as a kind of leader, but I think he is best characterized as an integrating factor in Chantel society and also to some extent in interethnic relations: he decides whether a Kami may participate in a ritual or not, and Magar and Thakali are also among his clients. The *jhãkri* of Ath Hajar Parbat (especially Kumma Siha) is also a religious policy maker. As a result of his pronouncements, 'particular deities appear, gain prominence, lose prominence, and disappear in the village pantheon.' (Berreman 1964:59).

Although some basic beliefs, practises and concepts are shared by all *jhãkri* much flexibility is left to the individual and this makes it difficult to speak of 'Ath Hajar Parbat shamanism' or 'Chantel shamanism' in general.

Wolf D. Michl

1. Research was carried out with the support of the South Asia Institute, Heidelberg University.

   Other than place names all words in Nepāli or Chantel are transcribed according to Turner's (1931) system as far as possible.

2. I use the term 'shamanism' in its widest sense and refer to the definition proposed by J. Reinhard for this volume.

3. For a preliminary report see my article (Michl 1973).

4. I am indebted to Dr. Jest for various information on the Chantel and his suggestion to do research among them.

5. I want to emphasize that this Kami was a soldier. Normally Kami cannot participate in death ceremonies for Chantel. The fact that he is serving in the Indian Army has apparently changed his social position and his caste status.

6. This development can be found among several ethnic groups in Nepal. See C. von Fürer-Haimendorf (1964b:140-160).

7. One would expect the term to be *jhãkrini* ('The wife of a wizard': Turner, 1931:231) but according to my information *jhãkrini* is the term of reference for the wife of a *jhãkri* and *jharini* a female shaman.

8. Round brackets signify translations from Nepāli or Chantel words; rectangular brackets signify explanations obtained after rehearing Kumma Siha's account on the tape recorder during the second and third interview.

9. A corruption of *srī rām* ?

10. Hitchcock (1967:149).

11. Adult people who die an unnatural death become a *siyo*. A *siyo* can trouble his own family as well as other persons in his village. Soldiers killed in action do not become *siyo*.

12. Kumma Siha told me that he could see his *guru* in the drum. To give a good sound, the skin of the drum must be heated.

13. A *jhãkri* can understand all languages when the *guru* is in his body, and when a god speaks through him in a foreign language, 'his tongue is moved by the god'. The first language of all *jhãkri* is Nepāli because this was the mother tongue of the First *Jhãkri*, Māchāpuran.

14. There is no restriction on attendance at a séance and especially for children it is great fun: imitating the *jhãkri* is one of their favourite games. The two neighbours who complained about headache caused by P.P.'s son's were not present. There is one restriction however: when the *siyo* is 'killed' (i.e., when the gourd is destroyed) women are not allowed to attend.

A séance is not a very serious matter; it is also an entertainment for the people. A *jhãkri* must be a good singer and dancer if he wants to be successful.

15. For this purpose only goat's milk is used because ghosts and spirits like it very much. Normally goats are not milked in Ath Hajar Parbat.

16. There are two classes of *siyo*: adult persons who die an unnatural death and become *siyo* afterwards, and those who exist since the 'Golden Age'; the latter are immortal.

After being killed, male *siyo* become *maṇḍauli* (derived from *maṇḍali* "A powerful and influential man.' (Turner, 1931:489); female *siyo* become *deyṭini*. Both are considered to be gods.

17. Small boys also wear *jantra* but I do not remember a single man who wore it. Bracelets, earrings and finger rings can also be *jantra*. *Jantra* are also provided by Indian pilgrims on the way back from Muktinath. On one occasion three Indians sold 22 *jantra* costing between 3 and 12 Rupees in Kuinekhani in a few hours. All were bought by women.

18. It is interesting that in the adjoining region of Bhuji Khola - Nishi Khola (about 2-3 days' walk from Ath Hajar Parbat) the *jhãkri*'s attitude is completely different. In his paper 'A Shaman's Song and some Implications for Himalayan Research' (1974a:152), Hitchcock compares the dual relationship between wife-givers and wife-receivers with shamanism and says: 'In the domain of shamanism we find a status which similarly is ambiguous, because like the status of wife-giver, it is also associated with power that can be either beneficient or punishing.' Among the *jhãkri* of Ath Hajar Parbat I could not find any indication that the *jhãkri*'s powers were directed at individuals within the community or that 'the shaman's status ... with respect to good and evil is ambiguously coloured.' (Hitchcock, 1974:152).

X

ASPECTS OF BHUJEL SHAMANISM

The shamanic complex described here[1] is found among people whose winter villages are located in the upper Bhuji (birch tree) valley. It also is found in adjacent valleys to the east and west and along the upper reaches of the Uttar Ganga, in villages such as Taka and Shera. The term Bhujel, which I will use to refer to this complex, is used by the people of the upper Bhuji valley to refer to themselves, and was used by others to refer to portions of this population throughout the nineteenth century (See Hamilton, 1819:19; Vansittart, 1894:231). The Bhujel complex was encountered during fieldwork in the spring of 1962 and a portion of a séance was filmed (Hitchcock and Hitchcock, 1965). A more intensive study was made during the summer and fall of 1967, when it was possible to tape completely a number of séances and to augment the small collection of ritual texts obtained in 1962.

Subsistence in the upper Bhuji valley is based on two eco-zones: the valley itself where winters are spent and high pastures in and around Dhorpatan. The major crops on the valley terraces are wheat, barley and maize; in Dhorpatan and adjacent areas, potatoes and buckwheat. The Bhujel are semi-transhumant, and members of most families spend the summer herding livestock and tending cultivation in the high pastures. Besides Magar of the Pun, Gharti and Budha clans, the majority of the population are Kami, many of whom derive all or most of their income from full-time agriculture and agricultural labour rather than in pursuit of their traditional occupation as metalworkers. A third and smaller segment of the population is comprised of Matwala Khas, a group claiming elite twice-born ancestry but now relinquishing the sacred thread because they no longer observe dietary restrictions such as abstention from alcohol and chicken. Shamans from all three groups were observed but I worked most closely with two Kami shamans and a Matwala.

The term for shaman in parts of west central Nepal is *lāmā* (Hitchcock, 1966), but in the Bhuji region as in many other regions in (e.g., Michl in this volume) and adjacent (e.g., Macdonald, 1962, and in this volume) to Nepal the word used is *jhākri*. Whenever 'shaman' is used in this essay, *'jhākri'* will

Deo Ram - Bhujel Kami shaman

be intended. As Macdonald (Ibid.) has pointed out *jhãkri* may also refer to a spirit. In some places the spirit *jhãkri* is not thought of as a shaman primarily or at all by many in the population. For them the spirit is a forest hunter spirit and is worshipped as such. The Bhujels also associate the *jhãkri* spirit with the forest and hunting and always refer to it as Ban (forest) Jhãkri. (See Paul in this volume.) But here the shamanic connotation is stronger, though not emphasized, and some have heard Ban Jhãkri beating their drums. Some believe dead shamans in time become Ban Jhãkri; others deny this and say they are ancestral spirits.

Although Matwala Khas and Magar sometimes call Brahman, especially for funerals of the elderly and well-to-do, and although the role of shaman is complemented by the role of astrologer (sometimes in one and the same person), the *jhãkri* holds the most central place in the religious life of the upper Bhuji valley. Yet despite the importance of the role, it cannot be said to have great political weight. Among the Bhujel the strong political figure, generally the *mukhiyā*, tends always to be a different person than the *jhãkri*, no matter how well respected. This statement is not meant to imply that most Bhujel shamans are abnormal, in the sense of being unable to fulfill the usual familial and occupational demands. All I knew were functioning well as householders and part-time agriculturalists; and some Kami in addition were metalsmiths. But the role did not provide sufficient security to induce any man to become a full-time specialist.

The Bhujel complex exhibits symbolic themes bearing a remarkably close resemblance to those found in Inner Asia and to some extent throughout much of the world (Eliade, 1964). This is particularly true of such ascensional themes as a ritual in which the shaman appears to be flying into the heavens with his patient, his initiatory pole climb, and symbols of speed and flight embodied in his costume. In other respects, however, as I have pointed out elsewhere (Hitchcock, 1967) the Bhujel complex does not fit the conception of primal and 'classic' shamanism as defined by Eliade. It does not have as its central feature the pure and (according to Eliade) historically prior belief that the shaman's soul ascends in ecstasy to commune with a Supreme Celestial Being. It exhibits changes that have transformed the original complex, innovations such as 'the fight against evil spirits, and also the increasingly familiar relations with spirits which aim at their incorporation or at the possession of the shaman by them' (Eliade, 1964:506). Hence in Eliade's view it represents a later falling away.

However we may view Eliade's belief in a primal shamanism based on ecstatic celestial communion (and to disagree raises the problem of alternative explanations for such widespread ascensional symbolism) he does lift to prominence certain features of

shamanism which I take to be essential. I will discuss these as a way of illuminating the nature of the Bhujel complex.

The nature of the shaman's psychological state has been of great interest to investigators, some of whom have recently discussed shamanism in Nepal (e.g., Höfer, 1974:168-182). I agree with Reinhard (in this volume) that the term 'ecstasy' is too restricted and carries too narrow a connotation. But while reflecting on Bhujel shamanism for this essay, I found I also was uncomfortable with the more neutral term 'trance'. Trance implies dissociation and in my opinion the shamans I knew best and observed most closely did not enter an altered state of consciousness during séances, at least no more than a good actor does when he takes a part. I simply do not know 'what is going on' in their minds. I find it easy to concede that some who have become shamans may have experienced mystical ecstasy, whether in Eliade's sense or perhaps in a way that excludes any particular conception of deity (Huxley, 1945). I also find it easy to believe that shamans I have not observed enter a state of trance. The point remains, however, that a whole spectrum of states is possible and in any given case I do not really know which of the many possibilities is present. What I do know is how the shaman describes his experience and what the community accepts as a valid and validating description of his state or states.

In Tungus shamanism (Shirokogoroff, 1935) two descriptions of what happens to the full-fledged shaman during a séance are taken to be valid and validating. In one state it is believed or reported that the shaman has incorporated a spirit. Moreover, the shaman enters both states voluntarily and when possessed is master *of* rather than mastered *by* the possessing spirit. All this ideology also is part of the Bhujel complex, as the following examples will illustrate.

The maternal grandfather of a Matwala Khas, 26 years old, was a respected shaman. During two séances when the grandfather called a god *(deutā)* and himself became possessed, so did his grandson, though none knew by what god or spirit. The young man trembled and shook and eventually began throwing himself about. Friends had to restrain him until the seizure had passed.

When reporting what this 'unsolicited' and 'uncontrolled' (Lewis, 1971:55) possession was like, the young man said he became unconscious *(behosh)* and was not aware of anything he did. He said that for seven years he had been subject to such seizures, particularly though not exclusively when his grandfather was conducting a séance. The onset of these episodes was initiated by a sensation as if a cold wind were blowing against his right breast. Then the god came inside and moved about actively throughout his whole body *(ang-ma tarkharāunu āuncha)*.

At some unknown time in the future he was certain that whatever god had been possessing him would announce his name and begin to speak through him. The god then would request persons within earshot to obtain wood for his shaman's drum. Only after he had learned the name of the god who had been making him shake *(kamāune deutā)* - now his chief god *(mukhiyā deutā)* - and had begun the process of obtaining a drum, did he expect to become his grandfather's pupil *(sikṣe)*. Only then would the grandfather begin teaching him his *mantra* and giving him some of the other necessary items of a shaman's gear such as bells, feathers and metal symbols of the sun and moon.

Was the young man in a state of ecstasy, trance? Was he an 'hysteric'? I do not know. What I do know is that in unsolicited possession the incipient Bhujel shaman is expected to *say* he is not in control of himself or the possessing spirit. Only later, by learning from his *guru*, by securing his costume and ritual apparatus, and by practising the art, does he gradually learn how to call his chief god, and, most important, to retain consciousness when this god, or any other god or spirit, enters his body. For the belief is that unless a shaman is conscious, he is unable to hear and reproduce what the intrusive deity is telling him. Among the Bhujel a controlled intrusive deity is said to be 'stable' *(thiro bhayo)*, and having this kind of mastery is the hallmark of the full-fledged shaman - an attainment re-enacted in séances every time a shaman calls a deity or spirit. For when the spirit first enters his body, he often acts in a way the audience recognizes as unconscious and uncontrolled. But gradually (sometimes with help from a member of the family or audience who sprinkles him with water) he begins acting in such a way that the audience recognizes he has overcome the spirit and has secured control of his faculties. If he has been drumming, the beat steadies. Instead of groaning, gasping and hissing he begins to chant and sing, and if he has been flung to the ground (sometimes close to the fire or even into it), he picks himself up and resumes his sitting position. *Thus he again and again recapitulates his novitiate.*

Uncontrolled possession and annunciation (reported or observed), acquisition of gear, apprenticeship to a *guru* and gradual acquisition of spirit mastery are culturally defined steps on the road to becoming a Bhujel shaman, but they are not the only way. Although uncommon among the Bhujel, I heard of one shaman and encountered another whose *guru* were supernatural beings. They claim to be self-generated (*bhuĩ-phuṭṭā:* i.e., 'earth-sprung', or *āphu ubjeko:* i.e., 'self-produced'). A legendary great grandfather of a living Bhujel headman was a shaman of this type. While plowing he was snatched away by the deity of Cold Water *(ciso pāni deutā)*, kept for five days and fed on earthworms while learning shaman lore and technique. The god took the boy because he liked him and returned him only when the mother, who

was a widow, had begun to hang herself. For ten days the boy was dumb and unable to eat or move. On the tenth day he became possessed by the Cold Water deity, who explained to the mother through the boy what had happened. Thereafter he became so famous a shaman that he was said to have been in demand by the king of Kathmandu.

A young Bhujel shaman had had a similar valid and validating novitiate. A *deutā* had come to him when he was 13 and taken him to the bottom of a lake, where he stayed for 15 days. Later the same *deutā* took him to a burial place in the Bhuji valley and kept him there three days and nights. During these experiences he was taught the spells *(mantra)* he was using in his séances. Instead of a drum, he was using a bundle of leafy branches, which he held in front of him and shook violently when possessed - an atypical feature I had not observed in 1962 (cf. Hitchcock, 1966). This shaman had lost a foot under what must have been extremely painful circumstances, but he said he had become a shaman before this misfortune befell him.

In the last two courses toward becoming a shaman the bodies of the novices were said to be present but the soul *(purush)* had been taken away. We have here a report of soul-loss or soul-journeying, though not the celestial journey that defines Eliade's classic configuration. For in both these cases the soul travelled on or under the earth. In my earliest data on Bhujel shamanism I did not encounter this kind of soul journey. The shamans I knew then did not claim to have entered the Other World (Hitchcock, 1967). Now we have this instance of more extensive soul-journeying, a soul-journeying during the novitiate that like the novitiate-as-possession is uncontrolled and unsolicited.

We can further augment this by an instance of *controlled* soul-loss, and it is noteworthy that the movement, if one is to be recognized as a full-fledged shaman, must be toward mastery - and voluntary control - whether of possession of of soul-journeying. A Matwala shaman performs a ritual to cure a patient who is unconscious. During the course of the ritual he sings a song in which over 100 local flowers, bushes and trees are mentioned. After this he calls a *deutā*, becomes possessed, and lies down unconscious beside his unconscious patient. His interpretation of this last portion of the ritual is that the *deutā* is conducting his soul among the plants named in the song, for somewhere among them the soul is hiding.[2] After some time the shaman awakes and ritually restores to the patient his lost soul. Especially significant in the shaman's interpretation of this search for a lost soul is his statement that it is not the plant that holds the soul prisoner, but one or more evil spirits, who use the plant as a hiding place. The shaman has to do battle with these spirits in order to wrest the soul away. It also is significant that the contest takes place on earth, or just beneath it, among roots.

Returning now to Eliade's three elements - a psychological state, and interpretations of it specifying soul-loss and journeying, and possession by a spirit - I would want to view Bhujel shamanism, first, as an activity that is *observed* by others or a mental state and/or an activity *reported on* by the actor - thus absolving me from any need to specify or imply what 'really' is happening in the shaman's mind. Two initial activities mark the beginning of the course toward being a shaman. One is lying as if dead, in fact or in report, and is *interpreted* as an uncontrolled and unsolicited instructional soul-journey. The other is shaking or flinging one's self about (again in fact or in report), and is *interpreted* as uncontrolled and unsolicited possession. So far as I know, all Bhujel shamans take one or another course. Furthermore, a shaman past his novitiate validates his role by activity and apparent mental states having reference to both these earlier occasions, but with the important addition of voluntary control. As a working, socially accepted shaman he describes his soul's journey as voluntarily initiated, and terminated when his mission to the Other World has been accomplished. Similarly, his voluntarily initiated possession is described, or acted out, as temporary loss and resumption of all his faculties. Except for commitment to the idea of trance or some other altered state of consciousness I find no difficulty in fitting this conception either to Reinhard's (this volume) definition (if we assume, as I do, that the shaman's is a social role and embodies activities, such as curing, undertaken for the good of the community) or to Shirokogoroff's (1935) description of shamanism among the Tungus.

Becoming a Shaman

In what follows I must be selective in two senses. Due to space limitation I must select from the complex as a whole, and will attempt to touch on only some of the most central features. Often I also must select from among informants, and again for want of space will present the complex as seen from one or another individual point of view. Although incomplete, this approach does less violence to the large component of individuality in the complex than to write as if it were homogeneous and one shaman or layman could speak for all.

The young Matwala we discussed earlier, who was possessed during his maternal grandfather's séances, expected to become his grandfather's pupil. Among the Bhujel it is not essential that a novice learn from a close relative but it is not uncommon. Nor is it uncommon for a novice of one caste to have a *guru* from another. Magar have taught Matwala Khas and vice versa. Both Magar and Matwala have taught Kami. To my knowledge, however, no Kami (who are members of an 'unclean' caste) have been the formal *guru* of Matwala or Magar (who belong to 'clean' castes). But much

informal learning occurs across the 'clean-unclean' caste line, because 'clean' caste members often are treated by Kami shamans and members of these castes frequently attend séances of Kami shamans. For this reason, despite ethnic 'cultural boundaries' - neither Kami nor Magar shamans for example favour the very large bell that is part of the Matwala costume - the Bhujel complex in overall perspective is not sharply caste-specific.

On his death a shaman's gear tends to pass to his most favoured pupil, often a close relative such as a grandson or sister's son. Among the Matwala the bestowal by his family of a dead shaman's gear is signified to be correct when the recipient shaman, wearing his newly received gear, becomes possessed by the soul *(purush)* of his deceased *guru*. In another type of inheritance the deceased shaman is believed to bestow some of his powers on relatives, regardless of whether they receive his gear. A Magar lineage grandson, a novice shaman, was believed to have received some of the powers *(gyān)* of his famous lineage grandfather, and a granddaughter received the gift of clairvoyance from the same shaman.

The latter gift raises the question of female shamans. To my knowledge the Bhujel never have had a female shaman. When queried, people say the work is too difficult for a woman. Elsewhere, however, women shamans, though rare, are not unknown, and I have seen one performing among the Pun Magar of Ulleri, in the mountains east of Beni on the Kali Gandaki.

Later in the essay I will give an account of a Bhujel séance. What follows is the account of the officiating shaman's novitiate and apprenticeship. This shaman was a Kami named Deo Ram and after a brief period of uncontrolled possession, he was visited by a deity. The god, named Kamal Jaisi Burma, revealed himself and spoke through Deo Ram to the people present at a séance being conducted by another shaman. At the time Deo Ram was 11 years old.

From that first revelation of his tutelary deity, Deo Ram, when becoming possessed, always has called Kamal Jaisi Burma first, and only subsequently, one at a time, any other spirits he may wish to consult. Should he have to call on Kamal Jaisi Burma a second time during the séance, he first offers him incense by burning juniper, or if that is not available, ghee mixed with sage.

When Deo Ram was first performing he had no costume and knew none of the traditional shaman songs (*okhā* he called them, or sometimes *śāstra*, or 'scriptures'). As a 'self-generated' shaman he depended on incantations *(mantra)* the god had taught him and also used a few medicinal herbs. To attain a state of possession he beat on a brass plate and when possessed could drive

away evil spirits by throwing burning sticks in their direction. In answer to audience questions, he also could foretell the future *(baknu)*.

In Gorakhpur, India, where Deo Ram stayed three months on the way to Burma when seeking army employment, he performed for resident Nepalis and was much respected because of a cure for blindness he achieved. In Manipur, Burma, one of the officers was a Matwala from his own home valley. This man, a lieutenant, had a wife and children with him and called on Deo Ram for shaman work. He was so impressed with Deo Ram's success that a year after Deo Ram's return to the Bhuji valley, when the lieutenant was home on leave, he arranged a meeting in Dhorpatan between Deo Ram and a Magar shaman from the village of Shera. This man was a friend of the Bhuji valley lieutenant's and had served with him in Burma. The Magar became Deo Ram's *guru*, acceding to his friend's request to provide the Bhujel, through Deo Ram, with as high a quality of shamanism as he was providing for the people of his locality. Thus Deo Ram represents a shaman who was both 'self-generated' and *guru*-taught.

The apprenticeship was unusual because Deo Ram spent only a few days with his *guru*. The more usual practice is for an apprentice *(sikṣe)* to spend a year, and sometimes many years, attending séances with his teacher, carrying his gear, observing him, and sometimes, as a way of learning the long songs, singing them after him verse for verse. But Deo Ram's *guru* wrote out his incantations, using Nepāli script to transcribe the Khamkurā in which he usually sang them. He also wrote out the spell to be placed inside a protective packet to be worn by a patient around his neck *(jantar)*. To help Deo Ram acquire power over gods and spirits, he had Deo Ram sit beside him while he drummed and sang the incantations required to summon various supernatural beings. After each spirit was mentioned, he shouted, 'Ho!' and moved his drum in front of Deo Ram, thus transferring control of the spirit to his pupil. At each transference Deo Ram shook violently.

Since Deo Ram's teacher did not write out the long songs that form a necessary part of the shaman's repertoire, but only sang them to him a number of times, Deo Ram had to transcribe these himself, after the *guru* had completed the singing, and his transcriptions actually were translations into Nepāli of the Khamkurā in which he heard them. Deo Ram said that for a shaman's power the spells and incantations were of first importance, and that for each shaman, or school of shamans, they tended to be more secret and particularized than the long songs, which tell stories that are widely known, and are more a part of the public domain - a fact that does not prevent each shaman from giving his own unique stamp to a story's rendition, whether by his style of singing, arrangement of episodes or deletions and additions of material.

After hearing his *guru*'s songs, obtaining transcriptions of his spells and incantations, and learning to control his protective spirits, Deo Ram began collecting the necessary items of a shaman's costume. For practice he would dress up in the costume, prop his *guru*'s words or his own transcriptions in front of himself, and drum and sing until finally he had them all by heart.

In this account I do not have space to discuss the ritual that accompanies the making of the shaman's gear, nor can I give details about smaller parts of such paraphernalia as the drum. I will list the major items forming the costume of another Kami shaman, whose gear I was able to purchase. The drum *(ḍhyãgro)* is one-sided and is held by crossed sticks fastened by rings to the inside of the rim - on which a bell may be fastened. The drum head is made of wild Himalayan goat skin *(ghoral)*. A wrist guard *(bholṭo)* is worn on the left arm. The handle of the slender straight drumstick *(gaja)* is carved. To hold thread offerings to his chief diety *(mukhiyā deutā)*, the shaman carried a stick with a trident *(triśul)* at the top. The whole article is referred to as a spear or javelin *(barchā)*. (According to local shamans the trident does not bear any relation to Śiva because it is made of iron rather than copper). The waist-length leather 'jacket' (with all its appendages aptly called *bhãṛa*: lit. 'cooking pots' and in the phrase *bhãṛa kuṛā*, 'pots and pans') consists of two shoulder straps and a wide belt at the waist made of wild goat leather. Some 'jackets' are made of barking deer *(rāte)* or wild sheep *(thār)*, but wild goat is preferred. The belt and suspenders are decorated with cowrie shells and bird skins are attached at the back, including skins of the Impeyan Pheasant *(Lophophorus impejanus*. See Rand and Fleming, 1957:62). Bells, and pieces of metal representing sun, moon and stars are attached to the shoulder straps, and one of them, distinguished by a coil of wire, was given by the shaman's *guru* and called *gurghanṭā*. (This is to be distinguished from the much larger bell of the Matwala, also called *gurganṭha* but worn in front and depending from a fastening around the neck). Together the bells and metal plates create a loud jangling when the shaman dances, or may merely tinkle when he trembles slightly. With his 'jacket' and drum (including the small bell and rings attached to the holding sticks) he is able to create a remarkable variety of rhythmic and sound effects.

This shaman had a variety of necklaces. Some were made of glass beads purchased in Butwal or local bazaars and stores. Some were interspersed with beads favoured by *sādhu (rudrācche, Elaeocarpus Sphaericus Gaertn.)* though some shamans said that only *sādhu*, *jogi* or other religious mendicants and ascetics should wear these. He also had a long necklace made of snake vertebrae and donned each necklace in the name of one of his *guru*. A final necklace which he regarded as one of the most essential features of his costume, to which a root of the *Umbelliferae* genus

(bhuṭṭis) was attached. Dug ritually in the high pastures, it helped him master especially powerful spirits.

His feather headdress *(bakhar)* consisted of pheasant and partridge feathers and to keep it upright he wore a tiara-like support made of porcupine quills. He wore jodhpur-like Nepali trousers *(suruwāl)* and during much of a séance sat on a low wooden stool *(pirkā)* carved from a single block of wood.[3] The costume and all other gear was kept in a specially made wicker basket with a top.

Once Deo Ram had obtained his gear and had learned his *guru*'s songs, he was ready for a final initiatory step on the way to becoming a full-fledged shaman. This is the pole climb and although not all Bhujel shamans have done it and not all believe they must, those with whom I worked most closely - and they were three of the most active shamans in the upper valley - regarded it as a necessary part of their credentials. Deo Ram said he took the step three years after his first association with his *guru* and the following is a much condensed version of his account.

When the *guru* had become possessed while singing and drumming, he was able to see a particular pine tree growing in the forest, and sent his two sons, who also were shamans, to get it. After they had made ritual offerings at the foot of the tree and had seen its top shake as they did so, they chopped it down, stripped it of all branches except for a tuft at the top, and took it back to the centre of the village. Here, they planted it upright in a hole. The *guru* blindfolded his pupil, and his two sons dressed him in his shaman's regalia and handed him his drum and drumstick. By drumming and singing, the *guru* again became possessed and transmitted his condition to his pupil. After calling on the Snake of Hell and the Sun and the Moon to be witnesses of what was about to happen, the *guru*, who was shaking, got up and leaned against the pine tree. His pupil followed him, grasped the trunk and shinnied to the top, still holding his drum and drumstick. The *guru* next asked him questions he could answer only by divining the future. Among the questions was how many years of life remained to his pupil's mother. When Deo Ram had shown that he had acquired powers of divination, the *guru* and his sons danced and sang for a time at the foot of the tree, and then the *guru* brought him down gradually by shouting 'Ho!' nine times. At each shout, Deo Ram slid part way down, until at last he touched the ground. During his return to earth, the *guru* prayed: 'Make my pupil as bright as the Sun and as beautiful as the Moon. Let this be my fame.' Following the rest of the ceremony, which involved the sacrifice of a ram and goat, the tree was ceremonially returned to the forest. A branch was given to the pupil, and he saved it so that at the time of his burial it could be set upright between the stones at the peak of his burial mound.

Shamanic Funerary Rites

In the Bhuji valley the final rites for a shaman are different from those for non-shamans. I present them in briefest summary, as Deo Ram described the funeral he expected. The dead shaman is dressed in his regalia, blindfolded and propped up on the porch of his house. He is made to hold a drum, and a drumstick is tied to his hand. His pupils, and the professionals he already has trained, come and sit before him. They drum and sing until all agree that the body has become possessed, as indicated by slight trembling, even sometimes by beating the drum. The body then is carried to a hillside chosen by the shaman before his death. A hole is dug and unlike customary burials which are by the river and prone, the corpse is placed in this grave sitting up, with the torso above ground. The rest of the body is covered with a cone-shaped wall of stones. The branch from the tree climbed by the shaman during his apprenticeship is inserted at the peak of the cone, and some of his bells are tied to it. Some bread and liquor, plus a lock of the shaman's hair, is left in a compartment just beneath the peak. Some six months later all the shamans who have been pupils come and collect the hair, drink the liquor, if any remains, and throw away the food. The lock of hair, plus a stone from just above the shaman's head, will be taken to the shaman's lineage spirit's memorial sitting place and will be entombed there under a small structure of stones, like those that have been erected as memorials to other deceased lineage members.

Physical Ills

Bhujel shamans frequently are asked to provide therapy, and most frequently for specific physical ills. To provide some indication of what a 'practice' is like, I'll note cases undertaken by a Matwala shaman within the course of two months. Each case was treated by possession during a night's séance, which led to diagnosis, and eventually to an offering to the causative spirit. A woman with boils was afflicted by spirits living in some of her cultivated terraces. The spirits were Banaskhaṇḍi (spirit of the forest sector) and Ban Jhā̃kri (forest shaman). She was told to make a shrine on the terrace and offer a chicken to each spirit. A man had pains in his left side. The causative spirit was a witch (Ban Dāini) who lived on one of his terraces and sent a witch arrow *(boksibān)*. He also was told to make a shrine and offer a chicken.. A young boy could not move his legs and arms. He was afflicted by the Kuce Lul and to propitiate this *lul*, the shaman had to have the assistance of two young men, one of whom was dressed like a woman. These two, known as deaf and dumb man and woman *(lāṭo-lāṭi)* dance when an offering is made and were demanded by the *lul* if it was to release the patient's arms and legs. Two different kinds of *lul* were causing a woman's swelling

goitre. They were propitiated by images made of wheat flour. And in the final case, a woman's painful eyes were found to be caused by a human witch. Her treatment was very similar to the one to be described subsequently as part of one of Deo Ram's séances.

Contexts Other Than the Family Seance

The ritual context par excellence of Bhujel shamanism is the séance, called by a family and attended by the family and neighbours. Shamans in states of possession, however, do function on other occasions and for other groups. At the level of the localized lineage, Magar with a recent ancestor who was a well-known shaman built a memorial earth-covered cairn *(maṭh)* on the stone trailside resting place *(bisāuna)* erected in honour of their lineage god *(kul deutā)* and ancestors *(pitra)*. On the full moon night of Baisākh (April-May) this localized lineage invites shamans who were pupils of the ancestral shaman to hold an all-night séance and the following day the shamans dance possessed to the *maṭh*, where a lineage member officiant *(pujāri)* beheads a ram. The horns are removed and with the rope used to lead the ram to the sacrifice, are hung on the *maṭh*, or on a pine tree pole beside it. During the night-long séance, or during the ritual at the *maṭh*, the deceased shaman possesses and speaks through one or another of his living pupils. A reading of the ram's pancreas also is thought to reveal his prognostic.

An example of shamanic participation at the local caste level occurs annually among the Matwala. An ancestral shaman instructed his caste fellows to build a shrine to a local goddess *(devī)* and worship there on the full moon of Bhadau (August-September). Matwala shamans participate in the ritual, becoming possessed and speaking for the *devī*, who is called Dakkhin (southern) Devī or Dakkhin Kāli. As a central feature of the ritual those present bedeck captured Monal pheasants *(Lophophorus impejanus)* with red and white threads, mark them with red powder, and sprinkle them with clean unbroken hulled rice. The pheasants are held by male officiants *(pujāri)* dressed as women. After the pheasants have been honoured thus in the name of the goddess, they are taken to the edge of the forest and released. Subsequently the goddess is propitiated by sacrificing male sheep and goats. As a rule these sacrifices are made by persons whose request for a boon from the goddess has been granted.

A ritual at the most inclusive Bhujel level is performed biannually to rid the high pastures of a *rāksas* - an evil spirit that kills humans and livestock and is said by some to resemble a horse; by others to appear like a man riding a horse, a bear or a tiger. Theoretically the ritual is performed by shamans from the whole valley. In actuality when I saw it, the active participants were

eight Kami. They came together in their regalia, and with one of their number as leader, sang antiphonally The Forest Spirit 'scripture' *(ban banpa-ko okhā)*. Three times during the course of the song they all got up and performed a line dance as protection against evil spirits. Intermittently some became possessed. Toward evening part of the group crossed the valley to a pass that leads from the high pastures down into the Bhuji valley. Here, near a shrine for the Spirit of the Pass *(deorāli)*, in a gesture to prevent the *rāksas* from going into the valley, they symbolically tied the spirit to a tree, and to signalize victory smeared their faces and drums with white clay. After sunset others from the group went north across the valley, driving the *rāksas*, and after crossing the Uttar Ganga sacrificed an uncastrated ram - a gift to persuade the *rāksas* to leave the region in peace for another two years. It was claimed that initially this ritual was supported by three upper Bhuji valley headmen, who provided the ram and received in turn a portion of the meat. Recently their support had waned and on this occasion the money for the ram was being raised initially from passers-by as the ritual progressed and later from a nearby village. The sacrificial meat was divided among participating shamans and they shared a portion with a local innkeeper who provided them liquor and a place to cook.

Techniques Other Than Possession

Before turning to a séance performed by Deo Ram - the work most specifically associated with shamanism because it involved possession - let me mention other ways that he served the community, for he was both an astrologer and a person who could tap power by the use of spells and other esoteric techniques. A shamanic performance is physically taxing. Deo Ram suffered painfully from arthritis in one knee. For this reason he had begun to cut down on the number of séances he would perform, and also to cut down on their length. But in addition to this reason for tapering off his work as a shaman, he also mentioned his belief in the greater power of astrology. 'Even the gods,' he said, 'have to obey the stars.' Deo Ram was one of two highly respected astrologers regularly used by the people of the upper Bhuji valley. The other was a Matwala.

The basis for Deo Ram's knowledge of astrology was laid when he worked for the British army and became literate. It was during this time also that Hindu influences on his life were strengthened by his memorizing and learning to sing long adapted excerpts from the Rāmāyaṇā and the life of Kṛiṣna. On his return to the Bhuji valley this knowledge made him the focal person in singing groups that were requested to perform at different homes. The basic feature of the presentation was excerpts from one or the other of these two Hindu classics, and involved drums, unison responsive singing, and simple repetitive dancing by men, some of them dressed like women.

When Deo Ram returned from Burma, during the same period when he was learning the shaman's songs from the retired Magar soldier he also studied with a Brahman who was leading the life of an ascetic and was living in a village adjacent to Monal. He spoke of this man as *guru mahārāj* and during the course of three years learned from him how to use an astrological calendar *(pātro)*.

Deo Ram's attraction to Hindu customs and forms of knowledge also became apparent somewhat later during a period of four years just preceding his third marriage, at the age of 32. An ascetic was living in a forest about a day's walk from Deo Ram's home. Deo Ram spoke of him as *prābhu* (lord), a title deserved, he said, because this ascetic, who worshipped Śiva, at will could change himself into a bird, a tiger and a number of other animals. Deo Ram went frequently to visit him at his retreat *(kuṭi)* and participated with other visitors in singing songs of devotion *(nirgun)* He began to wear the beads worn by ascetics devoted to Śiva *(rudrācche)*, and only under pressure from his father's sister's husband did he give up the idea of devoting himself entirely to this *guru*.

I was unable to make a study of Deo Ram's knowledge and practice as an astrologer. I knew he was in demand for information about dates of religious importance in the Hindu calendar, for finding appropriate names for children, and for determining what the astrological reason was for illness and other difficulties in which people found themselves. The few times I was able to observe him working as an astrologer he did not use a calendar, but proceeded, sometimes by counting on his fingers, or by counting the number of grains of rice he picked up between his thumb and forefinger, and by other means I could not fathom, to ascertain what planets *(graha)* were at the root of his clients' troubles and whether anything could be done about it.

Sometimes Deo Ram would diagnose a client without saying any spells or drawing on techniques other than his 'second sight'. When called to see an old Kami woman very ill with tuberculosis, he said, 'Your soul's soul *(haṁsa purush)* has gone to the graveyard and has taken root there'. He added that it now loved the graveyard more than it did her family members. Although he mentioned that satisfying a particular evil spirit *(siu dokh)* might possibly strengthen her pulse, he did not convey much optimism and concluded by remarking that she had best begin seeing members of her family not present - with the implication of its being for the last time.

By 'second sight' he also diagnosed the stomach pains of a young Magar adult male as being caused by an evil forest spirit originally a human *(bən dokh)* and by a witch living in the water *(jal ḍāini)*. His prescription was to make and offer two images *(murti)*. The young man made both of clay and in the form of

human beings. Each was placed on its own piece of birch bark, marked with some red powder and sprinkled with rice, water and sage. The one for the forest spirit was placed near the cattle-shed; the other, for the water spirit, was left at the community water source.

Another technique employed by Deo Ram and not depending on possession was retrieval of a strayed portion of the life spirit *(sāto)*. This involved use of a string seven times the length of the client's arm. After the necessary ritual, which included saying spells, the string was coiled around the client's neck. These acts brought the spirit back and wearing the string about the neck (or wrist) was meant to ensure it did not again stray away.

A Séance

To illustrate a séance, I will draw on Deo Ram's performance on the evening of March 9, 1962, at the home of a Kami from the village of Marbang. Chandra Man, the man who asked Deo Ram to come, had just lost a four month old infant and wished to protect his home from the infant's soul. The performance took place in the main room of Chandra Man's small house, with the shaman sitting before the fire-pit, his back to the wall, and the family and guests gathered in a semi-circle in front of him. Smoky pitchpine splinters placed on an iron stand in the fire-pit gave the only light. Besides Deo Ram, his son, stepson and lineage son, the following were present (relationships are to Chandra Man): wife, son, stepson, elder brother and his son, elder brother's daughter's husband, wife's two younger brothers, father, and father's sister's son.

While foretelling the future, Deo Ram's tutelary deity had told him to protect the family against witch-evil, a step taken in almost every séance. In anticipation he asked Chandra Man to prepare witch offerings. One offering was a representation of a woman and a suckling child made of dough and water, an image *(chhaunṛā-ko murti)* that stands for an attendant or familiar. A second gift consisted of a ball of ash with a singed feather stuck into it *(kharāni-ko pātlo)*. Both objects are customary gifts to a witch, and may be augmented by other dough images (of a cat especially) as well as various food items.

Although the work of making an offering to a witch went on concurrently with other activities, I will describe it to completion here. The person who made the offering was the youngest brother of Chandra Man's wife, and he began with two pieces of birch bark, one for the ash ball, the other for the mother and baby. With the ash ball he laid a thread, striped black with charcoal. He divided evenly between the two birch bark trays

some pieces of beer mash, some cooked rice and small pieces of pan-fried bread, cooked on only one side. The total offering was referred to as *pātlo*.

The next step taken by Deo Ram was a procedure to determine the existence of some obstacle or obstruction to the happy fulfillment of the client's life. The obstacle *(gauṇṛa)*, according to Deo Ram, is not the same as an inauspicious configuration of planets *(graha dasā)*. The latter unfortunate configuration can only be changed, he said, by Brahman or Jaisi. The former has a similar effect, however, and can be cured by 'the drum' (*ḍhyãgro:* i.e. shaman) in a ceremony called 'removing the obstacle' *(gauṇṛā uchalna)*.[4]

Witch Evil

Deo Ram began to sing the Nine Witch Song *(nauje gunāmi)* always used for removing witch evil, and serving to validate and explain the shaman's power to control it. The song tells the story of the First Shaman, called Rāma, and his confrontation with evil, in the guise of nine sisters, who were the first witches. The story makes clear that when speaking of a witch *(boksi)* one also can mean a highly generalized form of evil - perhaps the epitome of all evil - and a form manifesting itself in more localized and particular spirits, such as the water witch *(jal ḍāini)*, the witch of the high pastures and foothills *(buki ḍāini)*, the troublesome spirit of a dead grown up *(siu ḍokh)* or of a dead child *(rā ḍokh)*.

Witch lore, belief and practice is extensive, and sometimes conflicting. As background for the song only the briefest mention of some aspects of the complex can be made here. The nine witch sisters, the First Witches, figure prominently. Some hold the youngest witch sister, whose agreement with Rāma the song describes, bore a daughter and began a matriline of witches. Others do not believe in a matriline of witches. They say the nine sisters - all of whom still live, in spite of the deaths dealt them in the song - affect female embryos, so that they are born witches. They do this at random.

A pervasive feature of any shaman's supernatural world is the easy transition from what might be called the primal, universal form to a series of local and particular manifestations. Siddha, for example, may be spoken of as a primal and universal deity or as one of many local manifestations such as *laṭṭā siddha* (Siddha with matted hair like a *jogi*). The nine witches are primal and universal. They themselves may cause evil, or the principle of witch evil they represent may take effect through living individuals (*manukkhe-ko boksi* or *gāu-ko boksi*, i.e. human witches or village witches).

Rā and Siu provide another example of a shift from an eternal principle to particular and transient embodiments. Respectively, Rā and Siu refer to troublesome spirits of a child that has died before growth of its second teeth, and of an adult. But when people drive away a particular Rā or Siu they often speak as if the spirit had returned to and been absorbed in the primal spirit - the one from whom they obtained their essential and bothersome qualities. These Rā and Siu are omnipresent and everlasting.

To be born a witch means to have a special subcutaneous bit of flesh *(bokseri mãsa)* on the forehead. The *bokseri mãsa*, which the possessor is completely unaware of having, has two aspects: one is awareness, and is referred to by the term used for a kind of consciousness, mind or intelligence *(dimāg)*. For example, if a woman with *bokseri mãsa* quarrels with another person, the *bokseri dimāg* takes note. Then, although the woman may intend her opponent no harm, she nevertheless may do so, for the *bokseri mãsa* also is like a spirit or soul *(purush)* and under tutelage of the *bokseri dimāg* can covertly strike out through the eyes or sound of the tongue and afflict others. The synonyms for referring to this 'evil eye' and its effects are legion. One of the most frequently heard is *ched bhed*. *Ched*, from *cherṇu*, implies piercing or boring and *bhed* implies something hidden or secret. The heavy load of connotation that *ched bedh* carries may be rendered as 'the secret evil act of making with a glance a hole (as with a magic arrow or *bān*) so that a person's life slowly ebbs away.'

One of the shaman's major functions is countering the danger from village women who are *boksi*. Only he can tell who they are. Because of stringent legal penalties for baseless accusations (Macdonald 1968 and this volume) witches very seldom are openly named. In séances they are referred to by indirection and as I have noted elsewhere (Hitchcock 1974a) frequently are believed to be found among women of a man's wife's natal lineage. Occasionally, though, a shaman may indicate a man's own wife and a recommended cure is secretly mixing some of her excrement in her food and getting her to eat it. If this is done not only will she be cured but she will be incapable of bearing *boksi* offspring.

Since the song of the nine witch sisters is so central a feature of the upper Bhuji shaman complex, I will give a shortened version of it. I would prefer to present the whole original text, along with commentary and analysis. But even with the following abbreviated version it is possible to convey some idea of the type of material the song as a whole contains. With further work of the kind recently done by Allen (1974a) and Höfer (1974) it is clear that these songs and other folkloristic collections (Gaborieau 1974) not only will further illuminate shamanism but also will provide insights into unknown portions of Nepal's ethnic and linguistic history. Moreover, in some instances, as in this song, these ritual texts from the hills reflect a type of society and

its tensions, and more generally, universal problems of the human condition (Hitchcock 1974).

This song is the briefest version I recorded, not only from Deo Ram but from any other shaman. It was copied in Nepāli as he recited it, a line or two at a time. It is somewhat shorter than the version I heard him present during séances, including the séance being described here. In all versions I heard among the Bhujel the number of witches and the bargain between Rāma and the youngest sister are constant elements. But depending on the shaman and the context of the performance, episodes are expanded and contracted, added or deleted. The opening episode of the present version, for example, is very short. In another version it is much expanded by telling how the king tried to get help from a Brahman, an astrologer and another kind of shaman before turning to Rāma. Longer versions also go into much detail about the birth of the nine sisters and Rāma's visit to their parents. In the present translation I have tried to strike a balance between complete literalness and reasonably easy comprehénsion. In the space allotted I could discuss very few of the textual problems raised. This version, however, represents what Deo Ram says the text means. In his presentation Deo Ram used a number of tunes and rhythms. Another Kami shaman, whom I often heard, used the same tune and rhythm throughout.

The atmosphere during the singing of this song, as was generally the case, was very informal. Although the song had bouncing rhythms and singable tunes, and though it told a dramatic tale, it was so familiar that much conversation went on and Deo Ram once had to remind the audience to be more attentive because the song was being sung for their good. When longer versions are presented, even by better singers than Deo Ram, some of the audience cannot stay awake for the required two hours or more and roll up in their blankets and go to sleep.

Song of the Nine Witches

O great Age of Truth, that great Age. Good Rāma grew up and was created. He visited the people at the Dhumai[5] king's hill fortress. He visited the rich merchant, Khāte, in his room. They called Good Rāma. With copper drum and lead drumstick Good Rāma sang and danced in a state of possession.[6] Good Rāma sang and danced in a state of possession all night. He began to recognize witches *(kaksi)*,[7] he began to recognize witches *(boksi)*.

> 'O nine sisters[8] when I see your two long braids, how beautiful your hair is, O elder sister *(didi)*, how beautiful your hair is, O younger sister *(bahini)*. When I see your forehead, it is like the full moon. When I see your ears, they are like big tambourines. When I

look at your eyes, they are like doves' eyes. When I see your nose, it looks like a golden flute with a fringed nose ring.[9] How beautiful *didi*, how beautiful *bahini*. *Didi* you are beautiful, *bahini* you are charming.'

* * *

The description of the nine sisters continues at length, extolling lips, teeth, shoulders, arms, fingers, bosom, thighs, heels, soles of the feet, well-fitted clothing, etc. It ends with Rāma asserting that they are witches and pressing, despite their protestation, to know where they were born and who their parents were.

* * *

'I, Rāma, am called and brought to the king's palace and the ordinary man's house. I have uncovered the witch evil of the nine sisters.[10] I felt the nine pulses and searched over the surface of the earth and all its rooms. You are *kaksi*, you are *boksi*. Who is your father? Who is your mother? Where were you born? Without knowing your caste we cannot eat boiled rice together.'

'In District Number Twelve West[11] we nine sisters were born and our father is Old Man Kutchen and our mother, Old Woman Kutchen.'

'What village were you born in?'

'We were born in our house in Ranibani[12] village in Number Twelve West. This being the case we nine sisters are descendants of Magars belonging to the Pun and Budha clans.'[13]

'If you are elder than I, I'll regard you as an elder sister; if younger, as a younger sister. Let's walk about my *didi*, let's walk about, my *bahini*. Let's make a tour of the countryside, let's make a tour through the hills.'

'Our bones are naked and our stomachs are hungry. Which region shall we go to? Which hills shall we go to?

On hearing this Rāma gave a gift of rice mixed with blood and a ball made of ashes[14] to the *didi* witch.

'Eat this share and depart when you are driven away by ritual passes with a wand of leafy twigs.'[15]

At the crossroads near Ranibani village, they began to dance the *jhola*[16] on the large stone as flat as a woven mat. They began to sing *mangal*, began to sing *phãki*.[17] Good Rāma began donning his shaman's costume, brought a pine wood pole from Patharkot,[18] erected it on the flat stone at the crossroads and climbed it. He began to recognize *kaksi*, began to recognize *boksi*.

'*Didi* you danced the *jhola*; *bahini*, you sang the *phãki*, the *mangal*. You are *kaksi*, you are *boksi*.'

When Rāma said this, they danced upside down. The pole fell down and Rāma fell flat. Thinking Rāma was dead, the nine sisters said, 'Let us eat Rāma, let us eat, Rānju.'[19]

* * *

In the next section the witch sisters first consider eating Rāma's head but find they are prevented by the magic of his feather headdress. Thereafter they consider eating his ears, eyes, mouth, neck, shoulders, back, right hand, left hand, heart, waist, hips, buttocks, legs. But everywhere Rāma is protected by some item of his shaman's costume.

Rāma regained consciousness, took seven magic seeds he had with him and threw them into the air. The pole erected itself, he himself stood up shaking, dancing and in a state of possession, and once more began recognizing *kaksi* and *boksi*.

The nine sisters challenged Rāma to compare his learning in black magic[20] with theirs. He concedes theirs is greater than any shaman's and says instead they should compare their learning in white magic[21] with his.

* * *

Rāma said, 'Let's go, my *didi*, let's go, my *bahini*. At Bahra Bukeni[22] at the foot of the snow-covered mountain, the Monal pheasant[23] is calling kullis! kullis! kullis! The dazzling sun looks beautiful on the forest. O, my *didi*, O my *bahini*, the black skirt and white shawl is very becoming. Let's dance from right to left and let's dance from left to right.'

Good Rāma released a powerful spirit[24] in the vast forest. Good Rāma sent the spirit to the eldest witch sister. She vomited blood from her mouth. She tossed from side to side in pain. The eldest sister became the witch *(ḍāini)* of the high treeless pastures in the vast forest at Bahra Bukeni.

'In all four Ages you must eat the given share and depart at the behest of the wand of leafy twigs.'

The second sister exclaimed, *'Thakka barāsi!'*[25] and said, 'Rāma, you are sinful. Why did you kill our eldest sister?'

'No, my *didi*; no, my *bahini*. Rāma is not sinful. She passed through Bahra Bukeni at an inauspicious time.'[26]

* * *

One after another, while they travelled, Rāma brings about the deaths of all but the youngest sister.[27] With the help of Bhīmarjan[28] he drowns the second sister, who becomes a witch of watery places *(jal ḍāini)*. The third sister he afflicted with a fire arrow *(agni bān)*, which caused a fatal abcess, and the fourth

with cholera, so that she becomes the cholera witch *(haijā ḍāini)*. Bhīmarjan threw an iron shot weighing 600 pounds to kill the fifth. The song does not specify how the sixth sister was killed but does say she became the afflicting spirit *(dokh)* of a dead grown up *(siu)* or child *(rā)* when the spirit returns to trouble its nearest relatives. Bhīmarjan persuaded the seventh sister to cross a suspension bridge and cut the cables. The eighth sister was affixed to the sky by lightning. The ninth and youngest sister spoke:

* * *

'When I look to my right I don't find *didi*; when I look to my left I don't find *bahini*. They are killed, are destroyed. I take the Sun as witness and the Moon as witness. I name the village Surjepur.'[29]

Sāno kānchi (youngest sister) thought, '*Thakka barāsi!* They are killed. They will kill me too.' She began to change her shape. In the guise of a small fly she entered and hid herself in Rāma's own feathered headdress. He travelled from Bhansa River to Uran peak.[30] He was thirsty. Rāma thrust his lead drumstick into a big rock. Three spouts of water came out for Rāma. While drinking, Tipa Rāma[31] looked behind. He saw the young witch in her own guise.

'Why did you come, *kānchi*? In the south your next youngest sister has been fixed to the sky by lightning. Let's return, *bahini*; let's go back.'

'With all respect, Rāma, with all respect.[32] Listen to my entreaty; then I'll go back. If you kill me, no one in the hills will call you. No one will call you. If I go and bring witch evil, you, master, will be called. You will be given 72 pounds (nine *dhārni*) of sesame and 160 pounds (nine *muri*) of hulled rice. With all respect, master, with all respect. Let's go to the hills.'

He came home and struck the threshhold with a stick made of cane[33] and entered the house of Jhumā; the *jhākri*'s wife[34] said, 'In your name I have kept liquor and a white ram for six months. Before you go drink some liquor.'

The youngest witch began searching for shelter.

'Give me shelter in the upper storey.'

'There may be a ladder and horizontal entrance into the upper storey. You belong to the *boksi* tribe and have the eyes of a witch. Gold and silver treasure might be there. O your witch evil! You'll not get shelter.'

'With all respect, Rāma, with all respect. Give me shelter in the back room, shelter for one poor soul.'

'The lineage deity[35] might be there, and the gun storage place, and something to use as incense. You have the Evil Eye.[36] You'll not get shelter.'

'With all respect, Rāma, with all respect. Give me shelter in the entrance hall.'[37]

'You'll bewitch the water pots in the entrance hall. You'll not get shelter.'

'If this is so, give me shelter at the door.'

'Good Rāma strikes the threshhold with a cane stick and drives a three-pronged nail[38] into the door, making an obstacle to keep evil out. You'll not get shelter.'

'If this is so, with all respect, Rāma, with all respect, give me shelter on the porch.'

'The rice huller and quern may be on the porch. Children may be playing there, laughing and making jokes. The youngsters may be afflicted by witch evil. You'll not get shelter.'

'If this is so, give me shelter in the courtyard.'

'Women weave wool blankets on their looms and garments made of nettle fibres. You'll afflict them with witch evil.'[39]

'If this is so, give me shelter among your lineage brothers.'

'With you in the village of Bakharchema[40] I'll have to look at the blood and dead bodies of my brothers. The sin of this would be on me. You'll not get shelter.'

* * *

In the concluding section Rāma escorts the youngest witch sister to the crossroads - a crossroads through which funeral processions pass and where a ram, the companion of the dead, is sacrificed. Rāma reminds her she will leave his patient when he brings her share to the crossroads. The song concludes, 'Good Rāma spoke the truth. One word, two words, three words.'

Chandra Man, the patient whom the song and associated ritual was meant to cure, was seated near the fire pit. Toward the end of the song Deo Ram stopped and with a bundle of leafy twigs tied together with nettle fibre thread *(siāulo)* made two passes over Chandra Man's head. Then he handed the *siāulo* to the youngest brother-in-law and asked him to pass the wand of leaves slowly over the patient *(jhārnu)* and shake it above the two offerings on

the strips of birch bark. As Deo Ram resumed singing the brother-in-law, as directed, kept moving the leaf-wand and shaking it.

Deo Ram stopped drumming, took the leaf-wand from the brother-in-law, moved it over the patient three times and threw it so that it turned in the air and fell near the fireplace. The way the bound-up stems of the leaves land in relation to the patient reveals whether or not the patient is likely to encounter serious difficulties in the near future.

Three persons, including the youngest brother-in-law, were asked to make the offering to the witch. While Deo Ram drummed and sang a spell, first one and then another picked up a piece of birch bark and moved it seven times toward and away from the patient. The three left the house and followed a path until it was joined by another. At the crossing the brother-in-law, using a small knife, dug a hole. The mother and child were placed in it and then covered with earth. The ash ball with feathers was placed on top. Between the house and the burial, the brother-in-law made a series of seven V-shaped hatches in the path and struck the ground seven times with his heel. He explained that the burial and these acts placed obstacles between the house and the witch. Before leaving he said, 'This is what should be done to the witch', and urinated on the ash ball and burial.

When the three returned to the house, they stood outside and shouted, 'Ha! Ha! Ha!' to frighten away evil spirits and someone from inside threw out a live coal.

After giving them another charcoal *ṭika*, Deo Ram was ready to put on his complete costume. Before doing this, he intoned a prayer to Rāma, The First Shaman, whose role he was now assuming completely. The prayer *(Rāma-ko-okhā)* is brief. A translation follows:

> In the Golden Age, on that same day and date, in Talibhot, Rāma was created. With nine pieces of equipment, with his jacket, with pheasant skins on his back and a headdress of pheasant feathers, Rāma was created. I have walked the path Rāma trod and I will continue to walk this path. I sit on the seat where Rāma sat and will drink the drink he drank.

Chandra Man had brought a bowl of local liquor *(raksi)* as Deo Ram prayed. Deo Ram believed that if he did not drink *raksi* after every repetition of this prayer his *guru* would be banished to hell. Before he would repeat it during an interview, he obtained some *raksi* from his house. He was sitting on the ground and when he had prayed and had swallowed the *raksi*, he put his hand down as if steadying himself. Then he stood up. The prayer, he said, had made the earth tremble so violently that he couldn't remain seated.

He walked a little to one side and stamped on the ground with his heel. Reaching down and picking up some earth from the place where he had stamped, he blew on it, then scattered it in all directions. He did this he said in order to banish all evil spirits stirred up by the trembling earth.

After completing the prayer, Deo Ram put on the rest of his costume and picking up the cup of *raksi*, leaned forward and dippea the tips of some of his feathers into it. Then he shook his head vigorously from side to side, scattering drops of liquor. Next he drank the liquor, and taking out his low wooden stool, sat down on it. Once dressed and seated on the stool, he had assumed totally the role of Rāma and was ready to begin the evening's major ritual, the killing of a dead child's troublesome soul *(rā mārnu)*. I will describe the ritual with explanations given by Deo Ram and I will add my further interpretation at the end.

Killing a Child's Troublesome Spirit

In this ritual the central feature is a small-necked gourd *(chindu)*. Its purpose is to attract the spirit *(rā)* of the recently deceased four months old child into the gourd, which then is smashed. This drives the spirit away and barriers are erected so that it never can return.

Many things were done to make the gourd attractive to the child's spirit. So that the child would believe it had come to its own home place, the father dug up a little soil from five places along the path where the body was taken for burial. He placed the soil inside the gourd, and the wife's youngest brother added a puppy made of dough, a small bamboo tube filled with goat's milk, a piece of birch bark, and a small piece of unleavened bread cooked only on one side. To warn of the child's arrival, he also put inside a very dry *pãiyā* leaf.[41] To make the outside of the gourd attractive, he decorated it with white paint made of clay and water. He ringed a stick five times with charcoal and pushed it into the neck. It was meant to look like a flower. To provide an alternative entrance for the child he cut two holes in the side of the gourd.

The wife's youngest brother and Deo Ram's son had the task of smashing the gourd when the child entered. Both had sticks which also were ringed with stripes of charcoal so that the child would mistake them for flowers. When the spirit entered the valley where the house and its hamlet were located, one of the men, Deo Ram's son, would cover himself with a blanket and hide just inside the door. The brother-in-law would station himself on the other side of the door, steadying the gourd on the threshhold by holding it around the neck.

The father, his wife, her son by the present husband and her son by a former husband - the living members of the deceased child's household - smeared their faces with charcoal. They did this so that the rā wouldn't recognize them and go to them rather than into the gourd. The group was further disguised when they squatted, clustered together, and were draped with a fish net hung from a roof beam and weighted down with an axe handle. The man appointed to hang the net was the elder of the wife's two brothers. He was spoken of as the potter *(kuhmāle)*, a caste that also are fishermen. To further discourage the child from approaching them, the husband of the father's elder brother's daughter (a wife-receiver) stood by with a pan of water, a basket of sand, and a switch of seven stalks of stinging nettles. When the rā entered the vicinity he was to begin throwing sand and sprinkling water on the net, and beating around it with the nettle switch. Should the unseen rā approach too close to the net, it either would be struck with nettles, get sand in its eyes or be sprinkled with cold water - or quite possibly all three.

A chicken, with its head blackened by charcoal, and the bottom part of a plow - the part driven through the earth - were placed to one side under a blanket. At the unpointed end of the plow, beside the hole for the guiding stick, an iron staple was driven - the same kind of iron staple that is found along threshholds and elsewhere as a way of creating a barrier against witches. Both the chicken and the plow figure at the end of the ceremony and were hidden so that the rā would not be frightened.

Two men who stood in relation of wife-receiver *(jwāĩ)* to the father of the deceased child were given the task regarded as most dangerous. They were asked to go some distance away outside the house and create a low whistle by blowing across the top of a bamboo. The sound was meant to attract the rā. To protect themselves against attack from behind the two whistlers stood back to back. As a disguise and as protection from any lurking spirits, Deo Ram said a spell over some charcoal, which he rubbed on their faces. From time to time when Deo Ram whistled, they were to reply and to move gradually closer to the house, until they reached the porch, where they could sit down and continue to whistle from there.

About three hours before midnight Deo Ram began the song that provided the rationale for most of the ritual acts comprising the soul-killing ritual. For over two hours the song went on continuously except for a few interruptions when Deo Ram had to give directions to the participants. The song described in great detail the journey taken by the child's spirit, which Deo Ram was calling home. Actually the rā was itself comprised of two souls *(purush)*, and the journeys of both of the latter were described, well-known place by well-known place, as they converged along paths leading into the Bhuji valley from the north and south.

They met below the hamlet, at a crossroad where the path to the hamlet met the main valley path. Deo Ram said the rā (or alternatively, *lāgu*) was here, waiting for its two souls.

As the song described the rā's progress closer and closer to the house, the tension mounted. Deo Ram whistled more and more frequently and was answered by the two men, who by now were sitting on the verandah. The man by the door who was not under the blanket slowly raised his stick, ready to strike at the gourd he held in his hand. The net-keeper threw sand and water more and more frequently, and in between beat rapidly around the net with the nettles. When Deo Ram stopped singing and began clucking, as one would to attract a child, the tension was extreme. All was quiet except for the furious beating of the nettles. The whistlers had stopped. Then Deo Ram uttered an almost screaming yell, and immediately the two by the door smashed at the gourd, shouting as loud as they could and the bedlam was augmented by the shouts of two other men, who had picked up the plow and chicken, had dashed out of the door, and were headed down the path. They were followed at a run by the two who had smashed the gourd. They had picked up some of the pieces and were carrying it with them. The remaining pieces were collected by the father, who had left the net and was proceeding down the path followed by Deo Ram.

The party gathered some distance away from the house and went off to one side, to a very steep stony slope, where cultivation never would be possible. Here two of the men, using the plow, dug a hole about a foot deep. The striped stick from the gourd was put into the hole where the iron plow tip normally would be; the other two striped sticks and the nettle switch were put into the hole where the handle had been. The plow was placed in the ground as a barrier against the return of the child's soul. To attract a spirit to act as guard, one of the two wife-receivers beheaded the chicken and sprinkled the blood on the plow and round about. Finally Deo Ram placed his foot on the plow and uttered a spell to act as a further barrier against the spirit's return. The party returned to the house and the ritual was complete when those with blackened faces had washed and the father had given the net-keeper a coin in return for his assistance.

Interpretation

This ritual lends itself to interpretation as a rite of passage (van Gannep 1960). Turner (1969:94-95) has summarized van Gannep as follows:

> Van Gannep has shown that all rites of passage or 'transition' are marked by three phases: separation, margin (or *limen*, signifying threshold in Latin), and aggregation. The first phase (of separation) comprises

> symbolic behaviour signifying detachment of the individual or group either from an earlier fixed point in the social structure, from a set of cultural conditions ... or from both. During the intervening 'liminal' period, the characteristics of the ritual subject are ambiguous; he passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state. In the third phase (reaggregation or reincorporation) the passage is consummated.

In this ritual the family, under the leadership of Deo Ram, are moved away from their usual position in society. They are separated from everyday life by disguising their faces and by being hidden under a net. During the liminal period the rā is attracted and 'killed', and when this has been done, the family's return to society is symbolized by removal of the charcoal and the net. The ritual can be understood as a symbolic means for altering both the rā and the family's relations to it.

Death may be conceived of as complete or incomplete. Only when it is a return to Chaos and Old Night may it be said to be complete. The difficulty to which this ritual addresses itself is first that the rā's death is not complete. To use a word suggested by Turner (1969:96), the rā has not yet attained a state of socially undifferentiated *comitatus*. It has not disappeared, as a four-month old child should, into the void of forgetfulness. It still, so to speak, clings to its living role of 'baby'. As such it 'comes back' and 'bothers' the living. Because it still is part of the family it will be jealous of a new baby, and one of the explicit reasons for holding the séance was to prevent this incompletely dead child from harming the next child to be born. Looking at the situation from the parents' point of view, the baby - taken from them by no voluntary act of their own - still lives in their hearts, and the family members cannot be fully engaged in their usual and required roles, because they are 'half in love with easeful Death', as represented by their lost child.

The ritual cure for this state of incomplete death of the child, and the state of incomplete social life that is its mirror image in the lives of the parents, is reduction both of the family and the lost child to a state of undifferentiation or *comitatus*. As noted earlier this state of withdrawal and separation from incomplete death is symbolized by its entrance into the womb-like gourd. The liminal state for both child and family - though more literally so for the child - is reduction for both to the very edge of nothingness, to the almost totally amorphous point of initial conception, a state from which new directions then may originate.

The new direction for the parents is taken when they *will* the death of the rā. They have invited the shaman to perform the ritual; they have provided him with the necessary means; and

although they do not themselves 'kill' the spirit, it seems significant that in part this act is performed by a brother of the mother, one of her closest consanguines. Acting through the two men who smash the gourd, the family achieves a violent severance from the child and makes a voluntary choice of life that no longer is umbilical to death. For them this is what 'killing' the rā means.

For the rā being 'killed' means encountering hostility where formerly it found nurturance - and as if to make the shock still more great, the hostility it met came after flowers, food, and whistling had led it strongly to expect human love. The rā itself does not die. What dies is its involvement in life, more specifically in life as a family member; and as a precaution, were it ever to try and become involved again, the plow barrier, with its guardian spirit, has been erected. At the close of the ritual the claims of differentiation, or what Turner calls 'structures', have been reasserted against the amorphous claims of death, and both sides - the rā as well as its family - have been moved toward participation with the living.

John T. Hitchcock

1. For financial support while doing research on Bhujel shamanism I am grateful to the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research Inc., and to the Graduate School of the University of Wisconsin.

2. This interpretation may be compared to the interpretation of a similar ritual enumeration of flowers among the Tamang (Höfer 1974:178).

3. Many items of this shaman's gear also are worn by the Chantel shamans reported on by Michl (1974, and in this volume). His report is from a region about three days' walk to the east and south.

4. For a brief description of the ritual required to remove the 'obstacle' see Hitchcock (1967) and for a further account with illustrations see Hitchcock (1974b).

5. The shaman did not know who this king was, except that he ruled in the west. Nor did he know who Khāte was.

6. The word for dancing and singing in a state of possession is *jhyāng-jhyāng*. The song states he was *jhyāng-jhyāng*

all day and all night. *dinai jhyāng-jhyāng bhayo. Ratai jhyāng-jhyāng bhayo.*

7. *Kaksi* is a jingle *(raina)*. The word for witch is *boksi*.

8. They sometimes are referred to as *nau bahini* (nine sisters), sometimes as *nauja gunāmi*. The song itself is called *nauja gunāmi*. To the shaman *gunāmi* meant witch. The author is not certain of this word's derivation.

9. This line will serve as an example of the kind of freedom taken in this translation. The line reads literally: *nāk* (nose) *timro* (your) *hairdā* (seeing) *sunai* (golden) *murali* (flute) *jhumke* (fringe) *bulāki* (nose ring). The freedom does not go beyond the shaman's own interpretation, however.

10. The word is *ched bhed* and is discussed in the section on Witch Evil. It is one of a number of synonyms for witch evil that appear in this song. To explicate each would be impossible in the allotted space.

11. To the author's knowledge there is no District Number 12 West. To the shaman the phrase meant in the far west beyond the Bheri river.

12. To the shaman *Ranibani* connotes witch evil. It is a jingle on *bān*, the witches' magic arrow.

13. The shaman believes that Rāma was a Magar of the Budha clan. Other Kami shamans say he was a Kami, some Matwala claim he was Matwala.

14. The ash ball, usually with singed chicken feathers stuck into it, is an offering commonly made during an exorcism directed at witch evil.

15. This is the *siāulo* described later in the séance.

16. The shaman believes this is a witches' dance from the west.

17. The shaman says both are western witches' songs. *Mangal* usually means 'an auspicious song'. *Phãki* is a 'rhyme'.

18. Beyond saying it was in the west the shaman could not locate Patharkot.

19. Jingle on Rāma.

20. The word is *bidyā* (learning) but in this context the shaman says it means the knowledge of how to work evil. Among the Bhujel some shamans are reported to have practiced black magic and sorcery.

21. The word is *satya* (truth).

22. The location is not known. *buki* is high mountain pasturage; *bukeni* is a variant form. Literally *bāhra bukeni* means '12 high mountain pastures' but is used here to refer to a place in the foothills of the snow covered mountains.

23. *Lophophorus impejanus*.

24. *puthā bir*. *Puthā* is a word locally used in supernatural contexts for the rainbow and *bir* is a word used for a powerful spirit.

25. An exclamation without other meaning to the shaman.

26. *sāit* is an auspicious time for a journey.

27. Shaman's songs very frequently describe journeys (See Allen 1974a:6-22).

28. Probably the local pronounciation of Bhīmasen, the second son of Pāṇḍu in the Mahābhārata epic.

29. *surje* is a local name for the sun. The shaman places Surjepur in the Terai.

30. Locations unknown to shaman.

31. Another name for Rāma. He also is called Talibhot Rāma.

32. *jadau mājā, jadau*. This is the shaman's translation. *jadau* is a form of greeting, but *mājā* in this phrase is problematic.

33. The word for cane is *bet*, and the act is a way of driving away a lurking witch evil.

34. *jhumā jhākrelni*.

35. The *kul deutā*. In this room the ancestors *(pitra)* are regularly worshipped, hence the reference to incense *(dhup)*.

36. *lāmo nāza choṭo dicche* is the term used. As this shaman understood the term, *lāmo* (long) and *choṭo* (short) are jingle words. *nāza* means 'eye' and *dicche* is a local pronounciation for *dishā* (direction). Roughly, then, the phrase refers to 'eye direction' or 'glance', with the connotation of 'harm-bearing'.

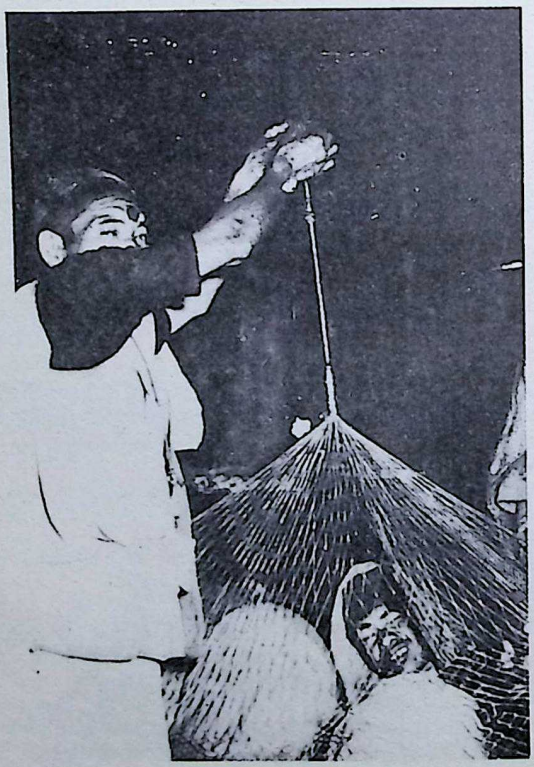
37. The house described is commonly found in Bhuji valley and elsewhere in the hills. A central room, with a fire pit, is flanked by an entrance hall and a storeroom, where ancestors are worshipped. A notched pole ladder leads to an attic, usually doorless.

38. Use of the three-pronged nail as a barrier against witch evil is a common practice.

39. The shaman believes this particular kind of witch evil *(hail)* makes the women weavers forget their count.

40. Location not known.

41. *Prunus cerasoides*. Wood and leaves from this tree often are used in supernatural contexts, especially in rituals for exorcising witches.



The dead child's family under the fishnet in the ceremony to 'kill' his soul

XI

ETHNOGRAPHIC OBSERVATIONS OF GURUNG SHAMANISM IN LAMJUNG DISTRICT

The Gurung are a Tibeto-Burman speaking people of western Nepal. Their habitation ranges from low valleys at about 1300 feet elevation to high forested ridges in excess of 6600 feet in the districts of Kaski, Lamjung, Gorkha, and in adjacent parts of Parbat, Tanahu, and Manang.[1] Culturally and linguistically, the Gurung bear a close affinity to their neighbours the Tamang, Magar and Thakali people. Economically they differ little from the majority of Himalayan hill people. They subsist on a combination of lowland and upland agriculture and animal husbandry, coupled with petty trade and military service as Gurkha soldiers. Rice, maize, millet, eleusine, wheat and barley are their primary field crops. They also keep a few goats, sheep, water buffalo and chickens which are eaten and used for sacrificial purposes. The Gurung also practice occasional swidden farming, river fishing and hunting and gathering in the forests. Those who dwell in the northern reaches of Gurung country on high ridges from 5000 to 6600 feet are called *lekhali* (N), 'highlanders'. Some Gurung highlanders are seasonally transhumant, herding sheep, goats, cattle and water buffalo (or yak in Manang District) in high Himalayan pastures. The sheep wool is processed into homespun yarn and woven into robes and rugs which, along with clarified butter, hand made bamboo wicker baskets and mats, and homespun hemp cloth, are important items for trade (Messerschmidt n.d.).

A distinctive structural feature of Gurung social order is its organization into two hierarchical and endogamous strata or subtribes called Char Jat (*chār jāt*, N, 'four clans') and Sora Jat (*sora jāt*, N, 'sixteen clans'). Each strata incorporates a number of named exogamous patrilineal clans which are in turn segmented into local lineages. The four Char Jat clans in traditional hierarchical order are: Ghale, Ghodane, Lama and Lamichane (N). In Central Gurung country, primarily encompassing Lamjung District, these clans are known as *kle*, *kon*, *lam* and *lem* or *khhrõ* (G), respectively. The Gurung in northern Lamjung District say *khhrõ-mai* (G, 'chiefs') when referring to the four clans of the Char Jat stratum together, as well as to the Lamichane clan in particular.[2] By historical and legendary account, the Char Jat clans of Ghale and, more recently, Lamichane have long held positions of economic, political and social dominance over the allegedly subordinate Sora

Gurung shamans performing one of the final dancing rites of the post-funerary ceremony of *pai*

A Gurung khepr̃ẽ's post-funerary ceremony

Jat. The Sora Jat is simply called *thar-mai* (G, 'the clans') by the central Gurungs. There are many more than sixteen clans (long lists of which are found in Pignède 1962, 1966), but there is no discernible internal Sora Jat stratification comparable to that found among the Char Jat. In this account I will refer only to a few Sora Jat clans which have relevance to shamanism. Although not entirely accurate, the various terms for the Jats and certain Jat-specific attributes and roles - the shamans' in particular - tend to reinforce the status distinctions.[3]

Research was conducted among Char Jat and Sora Jat Gurung of central Gurung country, primarily in a small highland village of northern Lamjung District called Ghaisu (pseudonym) and partly in the nearby and larger Gurung village of Ghanpokhara (true name). Both villages are in the drainage of the Marsiangdi River. The data were collected between October 1971 and October 1972.

Shamans were observed in a variety of ritual and non-ritual settings. Most attention was given to shamanic rituals associated with the occasions of death, burial and post-funerary celebrations. The primary objective was not to study shamans but to observe certain political and socio-economic aspects of Gurung life. As a consequence, the following observations of Gurung shamanism may appear somewhat lacking to the anthropologist of religion. The intent here is merely to introduce certain salient features of Gurung shamanism, to raise pertinent questions, and hopefully to encourage further investigation. Information supplementary to the author's own observations is drawn from the writings of Bernard Pignède (1962, 1966) and A.D.J. Macfarlane (1972), both of whom studied the Gurung in the more westerly districts of Parbat and Kaski, respectively.

Gurung Religious Tradition

Gurung religion is a combination of three strong traditions: indigenous shamanism, Tibetan Buddhism (or Lamaism), and Hinduism. Gurung shamanism appears to be closely related to the old Bon religion of Tibet and northern Nepal. Shamanism is the exclusive domain of members of the Sora Jat, but belief in the power and efficacy of shamans and the observance and active support of shamanic ritual is pan-tribal. Tibetan Buddhism, also closely allied with Bon historically, is more restricted in practice by the Gurung. Gurung lamahood is usually, but not exclusively, practiced by Char Jat men of the Lama clan. Buddhist lamaism is considered to be the religion of the Char Jat clans, with one important exception. The Ghale clan, formerly the clan of paramount tribal chiefs, has traditionally maintained a strong adherence to shamanism. The priest of the famed last 'Ghale Raja' ('king' or paramount chief) was a shaman of the class of *khepr̃e* (described below). Finally, the traditions of Hinduism have had an all-pervasive influence on both Gurung religion and society.

Three other ritual specialists sometimes encountered in Gurung villages are the Gurung astrologer or *paiḍi* (*jyotishi*, N) and the Nepali *jhākri* and *dhāmi*, 'diviner, conjurer, wizard', and 'wizard, sorcerer,' respectively (Turner 1931:321b, 327a).

Shamanic and animistic practices and beliefs pervade virtually all Gurung religious phenomena, but there is some evidence that Hinduism has had great influence on Gurung religion, particularly among those Gurung who dwell in the lower and more southerly parts of Gurung country where they are in close proximity to the dominant Nepali Hindu castes. In contrast, the highland Gurung of this study have been somewhat less affected by the Brahmanical concepts of religious purity, pollution and caste. Dwelling closer to the Tibetan borderlands and pursuing trade in those parts, the highlanders have been more influenced by egalitarian Tibetan Buddhism. In some respects, throughout Gurung country, the observance and support of Buddhist and/or Hindu ritual has considerable prestige and status-supportive value.

Many of the religious and social differences between Gurung high and low, north and south, are rapidly diminishing nowadays due to changing and improved patterns of communication and the increased influences of the national government in the hill districts. Recently, for example, Tibetan border trade has been curtailed and many bustling new Nepali trade centres, constructed on new motor roads into and through the hills, are drawing the Gurung trade southward. These markets foster intimate ties with the Nepali national culture. There have also been other innovative and aggressive moves by the government in Kathmandu to promote internal unity and a strong national identity throughout the country.

Not the least influential as agents of change are the mercenary soldiers in the service of the British, Indian and Nepali armies. Retired Gurkha soldiers returning to their home villages from abroad often form the local elite. For years they have been bringing home an increased consciousness of caste, Hindu religious practices and knowledge and expertise in economic and political matters. Although they are generally supportive of Gurung tradition, the soldiers nevertheless embody a new incentive for change.

Categories of Gurung Shaman

There are two categories of Gurung shaman, the *pajyu* and the *khepreˉ*.[4] While both are found throughout Gurung country, there tend to be more *pajyu* shamans in the western districts where Macfarlane and Pignède studied and more *khepreˉ* shamans among the central Gurung. Differences between them are not readily distinguishable by an outsider. Both traditions incorporate elements of the pre-Buddhist Bon religion which is still prevalent in remote

Himalayan regions. Aspects of Tibetan lamaism and of Hinduism are also detected in their ritual style and paraphernalia. Sub-categorizations within each tradition are far more difficult to distinguish. They centre around differences in oral traditions, in systems of learning, and in subtle esoteric particularities of paraphernalia and performance. Many kinds of paraphernalia are widely shared by Gurung shamans, such as the one-sided drum, cymbals, beaded necklaces and vessels for drinking, offering and burning incense. Some of the *khepr̃e* shamans' equipment such as the bell, butter lamps and conical figures (like *torma*) constructed of flour and butter resemble those of Buddhist lamaism and are indicative of a close relationship between shamanism, lamaism and Bon;[5] the *pajyu* do not use them.

Apparently Pignède's and Macfarlane's best informants on religious matters were *pajyu* shamans. Pignède (1966:293-298) describes their ritual traditions in detail and compares them with the few *khepr̃e* shamans he observed. Macfarlane's (1972) entire discussion of ritual healing is based on *pajyu* traditions.

The *pajyu* is sometimes inaccurately called a *jhãkri* (N). Central Gurung informants, in describing the *pajyu* were heard to say that he was 'like' the *jhãkri*, but although there are some outward functional similarities the differences between *pajyu* and *jhãkri* are very pronounced and important. The *jhãkri* is essentially a phenomenon of non-Gurung Nepali society and is noted for trance and possession. The Gurung *pajyu*, on the other hand, is never possessed and his mythical traditions describe no possession scenes (Pignède 1966:293). Nor does the *khepr̃e* shaman gain possession, although both *pajyu* and *khepr̃e* claim the ability to *control* the supernatural by various esoteric means. The difference is that between mild ecstacy and full possession. Furthermore, the *pajyu* and *khepr̃e* shaman revelations are based upon extensive oral traditions in the form of myths (*pe*, G), while *jhãkri* revelation is often self-generated (*bhuĩ phuṭṭa*, N).

A Gurung shaman does not appear to exhibit any noticeable or unique psychological characteristics or any predisposing psychic attributes, although an in depth study might reveal what is not immediately discernible. Occasional references to attainment of trance states and of possession by some villagers (*not* shamans) came to my attention, but I was unable to witness them or to determine if the persons involved were apt to become ritual specialists. Because no complete life history of any shaman was recorded, I am unable to relate details of selection or of the recognition or acceptance of a special calling.

Shamanic recruitment is basically hereditary among Sora Jat clansmen. Most shaman *guru* wish to pass on their revelation and esoteric knowledge directly to a son, but in fact, anyone wishing to become a shaman can study with a master shaman by mutual agree-

ment. A young man may begin studying shamanism during his teen years. As a neophyte he is called *shiso* (G). The period of his apprenticeship varies according to the personality of the neophyte and the strength of his commitment and interest. He is invested with full *guru* status only when his master considers him adequately prepared, and only then is he allowed to be called *'guru'* and to use the full range of paraphernalia and artifacts of the shaman (although he may have held or looked after some of the more important artifacts, such as the bird, described below, during rituals when his master was preoccupied with other duties). During his course of study the novice learns to use the required ritual paraphernalia and commits the oral traditions *(pe)* to memory. Society usually recognizes a shaman as a *ṭhulo* (N, 'great') *guru* after he has completed considerable study with one or more notable *guru* and particularly after he has overseen the successful completion of his *guru*'s final post-funerary ritual *(pai)* which is described in detail below.

The *khepr̃e* shaman of Ghaisu village claims direct patrilineal descent from an ancestral shaman of ten generations ago. Part of his claim rests on the possession of a small artifact or token of shamanic authority. This token (*chinu*, N) is invested with mystical significance and power revealed to the forefather who first obtained it from his master. The power of the token is thenceforth inherited by all of his direct successors who become shamans. In this instance the *chinu* is a small clay vessel, but informants spoke of a similar token, a piece of deer horn, claimed to have analogous attributes and history owned by a shaman in a neighbouring village. It appears that this practice of having a token of authority and power is widespread among Gurung shamans.

In no sense is the shamanic role a self-sustaining one in economic terms, although all shamans receive some remuneration in the form of gifts of grain, meat and bear for ritual services rendered. All shamans observed in Ghaisu, Ghanpokhara and vicinity used shamanism to augment their regular farming and herding economies and no Gurung shaman (or *lāmā* or astrologer) was encountered who relied exclusively on his ritual specialization for a living.

Becoming a shaman is a Sora Jat man's prerogative. No female shamans were encountered or mentioned as now living or practicing by my informants. There is, however, the legend of a female *pajyu* shaman called Chyangurani.[6] The legend relates that there were once two brothers who were *pajyu* priests. One had a son named Loche (*loch̃e*, G) who became his father's successor, but the other brother had only a daughter, Chyangurani, to succeed him. She became a shamaness. Since that time the Gurung recognize two sub-categories of *pajyu*: one following the traditions of Loche-Pajyu and the other following Chyangurani-Pajyu.[7] These days the latter line is inherited exclusively by men, and certain aspects

of their costume display feminine characteristics (see Footnote 11).

Most Gurung shamans are members of only certain few Sora Jat clans. The few *pajyu* shamans encountered among Central Gurung belong to the Pajyu and Kromze (*kromzẽ*, G) clans. Pignède reports that some of his *pajyu* shaman informants were Lehnai (*lehṅai*, G) clansmen (1966:293).[8]

It has been suggested that among the *kheprẽ* shamans there are two basic sub-divisions based on membership in one or another of two Gurung sub-clans, the Ko-Khepre (*ko-kheprẽ*, G) and the Tu-Khepre (*tu-kheprẽ*, G) clans (Pignède 1966:196). It may be more correct to refer to these as separate clans, Tu and Ko (or *kokẽ*) as informants in Ghanpokhara and Ghaisu preferred. Pignède also mentions hearing of *kheprẽ* shamans belonging to the Thimze (*thimzẽ*, G) and the Murmumze (*murmumzẽ*, G) (Ibid.).

My data reveal several other *kheprẽ* shaman categories and clans. In Ghanpokhara and vicinity, *kheprẽ* shamans belonging to the Tu clan[9] are further categorized as *bāhra* ('twelve', N) *kheprẽ* or as *sattais* ('twenty-seven', N) *kheprẽ*. The precise significance of the numbers is unclear, but other differences between them are more apparent. All *kheprẽ* shamans believe that the ultimate source of their revelation, power and authority is with the Bon 'lamas' of Lupra, a monastery village in the Tibetan border region of Lo (Mustang) in the upper Kali Gandaki River Valley northwest of Gurung country.[10] But, while the *bāhra kheprẽ* believe that each shaman should journey to Lupra at least once in his lifetime for study and in order to gain supreme wisdom, the *sattais kheprẽ* do not. The latter believe that their own local *guru* are able to transmit all requisite knowledge and that a revitalization pilgrimage back to Lupra, where their forefathers once studied, is unnecessary.[11] One of the most renowned shamans of the *bāhra kheprẽ* class resides in lower Ghanpokhara village, and his counterpart among the *sattais kheprẽ* lives in upper Ghanpokhara.

A third category of *kheprẽ* shaman is the Ko (or *kokẽ*) *kheprẽ* recruited from the Ko clan and found particularly at Pasgaun village west of Ghanpokhara. Another is the Maptse (*maptsẽ*, G) *kheprẽ* of the Maptse clan found in and near Gilung village south of Pasgaun. Still another type is called Mrokre (*mrokrẽ*, G) *kheprẽ* which informants said is found in Gorkha District east of Lamjung. The latter type is thought to combine certain features of the other four *kheprẽ* traditions plus elements of the *jhãkri* complex.

Ornithological symbolism is a pervasive theme in Gurung shamanism, as it is in shamanism widely (Eliade 1964:156-158). Between the *pajyu* and the *kheprẽ*, however, it takes slightly different forms. For the *pajyu*, feathers are an integral part of the ritual

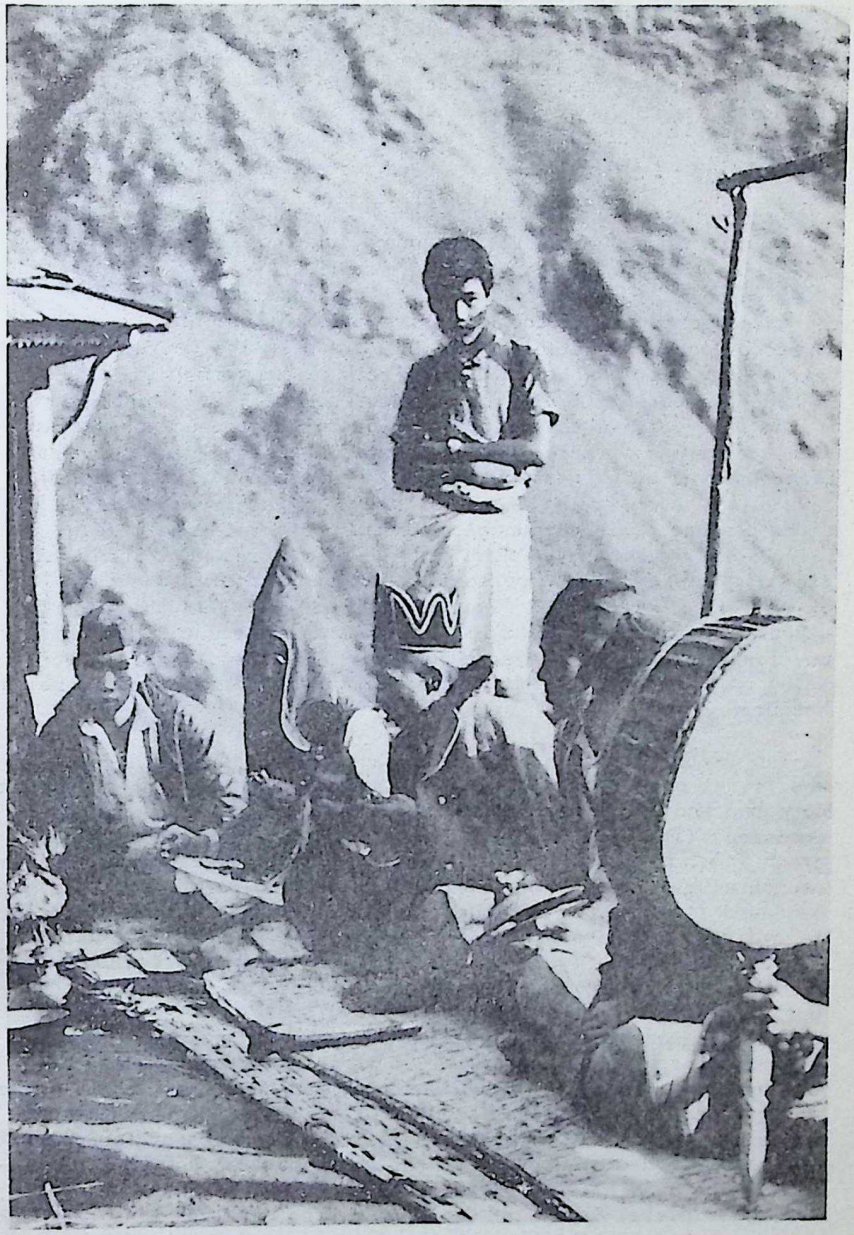
regalia, while for the *khepr̃e* a small wooden bird called a *nam̃i* (G) is the principal ritual artifact. This bird is the embodiment of the shaman's patron deity or lord and the repository of his mystical power over the supernatural. The right to possess and use the wooden bird, which is hand held during rituals, is invested only with full attainment of *khepr̃e* guruhood. Thereafter, every time the *khepr̃e guru* completes a funeral or post-funerary ritual he attaches a white tassle (which is torn from a gift of white cloth brought by affines of the deceased) to his personal wooden bird. The amount of experience that any one *khepr̃e* shaman has had is accountable by the number of tassles (which resemble feathers).[12] The symbolism of the bird is an important element in the post-funerary rites for a departed *guru* (described below).

Functional distinctions between the primary categories of *pajyu* and *khepr̃e* shamanism are difficult to separate because of their inherent close relationship to begin with and the frequent tendency of one to substitute for the other in the performance of certain rites. The most characteristic performance of both types of shaman are those rituals dealing with death and burial and particularly with post-funerary memorial celebrations.

Gurung Shaman Funerary Rites

Funerals (*mhi̇ sibari̇*, G) and post-funerary celebrations (*pai*, G) are the most significant ritual and social occasions in Gurung society. They are lengthy, elaborate, richly colourful and socially ostentatious affairs involving ritual specialists and all categories of kinsmen in intimate reciprocal interaction. They are important as rites separating the living from the dead, in affirming the shaman's (or lama's) powers of controlling the supernatural, and as rites of reaffirmation and reconfiguration of statuses and roles among the living heirs and of alliances and bonds between ongoing corporate groups. It is difficult to improve upon Pignède's characterization of the funerary ceremonies as holding the primary place ('la place de premier') in Gurung ritual and social life (1966:340):[13]

> The funeral ceremony is doubtless the most important in the eyes of the Gurung from both the social and religious points of view. In fact, during the funeral the social and religious blend in such a complex and logical way that it would seem useless, to my way of thinking, not to say false, to try to categorize them systematically in order to analyze the Gurung way of life. In the funeral ceremony all Gurung beliefs and institutions are found together, complete and explained. The lama, pucu *pajyu* and klihbri *(khepr̃e)* priests officiate side by side, a characteristic which is not found in any other ceremony. Funerals reunite not only the family ... but



Gurung lama reciting the initial rites for the *pai* ceremony of the *Chār jāt*

> also the clan members of the deceased living in other villages ..., people from allied clans, and finally those people from the clan which is more or less tied by friendship to the dead person or the family. Funerals affirm both family relationships between people who are connected with the dead man, the relationships between clans, villages, and those relationships taking all their significance from a religious context which embodies many varying beliefs.

The final and most ostentatious of all funerary events is the celebration of *pai* which follows death and burial by as few as several days or as many as several months or years.[14] The timing of *pai* depends upon two factors: (1) the ability of the clan of the deceased to afford the expensive celebration, and (2) certain horoscopic considerations. Most *pai* are held in the fall of the year during the Nepali months of Kārtik or Mangsir (mid-October to mid-December) following the harvest season. *Pai* may be held in the same year as the death occurred, or postponed and combined with *pai* of one or more other clansmen in another year. *Pai* have been observed which were conducted in as short a time as a few days or weeks following death. A very prominent person's *pai* may be held alone or in conjunction with a close relative's (e.g. a wife, son or daughter). Most *pai*, however, are a combined effort (*tu-pai*, G) for several persons (adult and children) of one clan or of two or more allied clans in the same Jat. In this way the expense involved is spread widely and thereby reduced. The *pai* may last two or three days, depending on astrologic prescription based on the horoscope of the most prominent deceased adult being honoured.

The laymen who are present and who participate in the social and ritual obligations of the *pai* include, (1) the clansmen of the deceased who serve as the patrons or sponsors (*neb*, G) of the occasion, (2) close kinsmen of the immediate patrilineal descent group (*tha*, G) of the deceased who performs the most outward signs of mourning, (3) those affines in a receiving relationship to the deceased (i.e. *mo*, G, 'daughter's husband') and (4) those affines in a giving relationship to the deceased (i.e. *āsyõ*, G, 'wife's brother'). Of the two groups of affines, the *mo* (plural *mo-mai*) or 'wife-receivers' have the responsibility for performing the polluting duties related to death and disposal of the body and during the commemorative rites of *pai*. They handle the corpse, bind it, carry it to the burial or cremation grounds, and inter or burn it. During *pai* they construct and handle exclusively the effigy (*pla*, G) of the deceased. For those duties they are compensated, partially, by receiving all of the gifts of food, drink and the shroud cloth which others in the funeral company (particularly the *āysõ* affines) have given in honour of the deceased. The *āsyõ* (plural *āsyõ-mai*) or 'wife-giving' affines give the most important gifts without which the funerary events are incomplete.

They bring the white flag (*alã̃*, G) which is flown above the house of the deceased at both death and *pai*, the shroud *(āsyõ kwẽ)*, and various other gifts. The *āsyõ* then become, in turn, the most honoured guests of the funeral and *pai* occasions.

Either a shaman or a *lāmā* can perform *pai* alone or in conjunction with one another, but there are subtle sociological, doctrinal and esoteric distinctions between them. For instance, the *lāmā* usually performs *pai* for Char Jat clansmen, although a shaman can do likewise, depending on the wishes of the clansmen who sponsor *pai* and the local availability of one or the other type of specialist. In joint performance of *pai* by a *khepr̃ẽ* shaman and a village *lāmā*, for example, each priest takes the responsibility for placating or controlling particular forms of evil and good. The rites are often virtually identical and are functionally analogous, but are known by different terminologies. The following disucssion focuses exclusively on shaman-officiated *pai* observed at Ghaisu and Ghanpokhara.

In a *pai* officiated by a *khepr̃ẽ* shaman it is customary to invite a *pajyu* exorcist at the start of the proceedings to take the primary responsibility for exorcising the demons of the underworld from the spirit of the deceased. In instances when a *pajyu* is not locally available it is not uncommon to find a *khepr̃ẽ* shaman in his stead. The Gurung believe that at death, the spirit of the dead is captured by demons of the underworld and that they must be separated before proceeding with *pai*. The rite performed by the exorcist is called *mosĩ tẽb* (G), and it is considered to be the single most characteristic *pajyu* ritual. On the first night of *pai* the *pajyu* beckons the deceased by name, in company with the underworld demons, to approach the house or hut where *pai* is being held and where the kinsmen and affines are assembled expectantly. In the total darkness of night, the *pajyu* performs a séance to wrest exclusive control of the deceased away from the demons, and to drive the latter away forever. Success in this endeavour is interpreted by certain predicted signs. For this rite a chicken is hung by its feet from the top of a miniature arch which serves as the entryway for the spirits. Around the arch the relatives of the deceased have placed plates of food. As the *pajyu* begins his exorcism séance and recitations, the chicken is restrained from flapping. At the climax of the recitations the chicken is allowed to hang free and when it flutters the exorcism is effected. The spirit of the deceased is believed to be released from the demons and free to enter the company of living relatives, where some of his favourite foods are set out for him. For another sign, the shaman may predict that a white feather will alight on a platter of food. When the torches are lighted and a search conducted, the feather is usually found - certain proof of the shaman's power. If the signs do not occur or are vague, the recitation is repeated until they are clearly seen.

During the recitations, the shaman speaks in a partially unintelligible dialect (old Gurung?). He recites, among other things, the names of well known geographic locations leading from the high mountains, down through familiar highland pastures and forests to the village. This funerary geography includes points on the route along which the forefathers are said to have come when they first settled south of the Himalaya (from the north). It now serves as the route along which the spirits of the deceased reapproach the village after death. Of particular interest are place names about the site of the first Gurung settlement, long deserted. This ancient village, called Khhol, was located in the dense high forest of Lamjung Himal (Messerschmidt n.d.).

The certain presence of the spirit of the deceased is signalled again during the ritual sacrifices conducted by the *khepr̃e* shaman. At one point a goat is brought into the shaman's presence, washed by the relatives of the deceased, and set free to browse among other plates of food. When the goat shakes, the members of the crowd, particularly the wailing women, snatch tufts of hair from the animal and place them in their hair. They believe that the deceased has shown his pleasure to them by affecting the goat. The tufts of hair are considered symbolic of the deceased's blessing. Thereafter, the goat is quickly killed by the affines *(mo)* of the deceased by cutting out its heart.

The one aspect of ritual which is uniquely characteristic of *khepr̃e* shamanism is the blood sacrifice, called *tho seba* in Gurung *(kāṭmār)* (N).[15] He directs many blood sacrifices during the course of *pai* and he believes that his efforts are ineffectual without them. (*Lāmā*, on the other hand, refrain from all forms of killing; instead, they symbolically destroy evil by skewering small demon effigies moulded of flour and butter.) Note that no shaman himself ever performs the actual killing; that is the responsibility of those affines of the deceased who are in the relationship of receiving, the *mo*. Note also that the blood of the sacrificial animals is used only for ritual purposes; it is never eaten. The meat, however, is saved for later feasting, some select parts of which are reserved for certain categories of relatives and of ritual specialists.

While some of these sacrifices of goats, sheep, and chickens indicate possession and presence of the spirit of the deceased, others of them signal possession by forces of evil, usually at the behest of the priest. In the latter cases, killing the animal ensures that the deceased can journey safely to *lanãs* (G), the 'abode of the gods', free of any residual sin or danger. The deceased is also given the seed of livestock and fowl through blood sacrifices and other symbolic rites using goats, sheep, and chickens.

Throughout the duration of *pai* the *khepr̃e* priest is responsible

for preparing the spirit of the deceased for his journey through the afterlife to *lanãs*. *Lanãs*, where the ancestors abide, is considered to be above and north (while the underworld, the domain of the demons, is below). Getting to *lanãs* is effected by a long series of rituals.

Shortly after the underworld demons are exorcised by the *pajyu* shaman, the *mo* affines construct a small effigy of the deceased which is called a *pla* (G). The *pla* is placed prominently on the porch of the house or in the hut where *pai* is being conducted, and it becomes the centre of all attentions for the duration of the proceedings. It is identified by a special name card (cf. Snellgrove 1957:265). As the dead kinsmen are feted by their survivors, gifts of food, drink, money, cigarettes, clothing, and other sundries are heaped upon the *pla*.

The *pla* is constructed according to ancient presceiption out of wood and leaves, symbolic of physical body parts such as bones, hair, blood, etc. It is constructed to resemble the conical shaped frame in which the corpse was bound to the bier prior to burial or cremation. Within the *pla* is placed the 'essence of life' called *rhi* (G) which is either ash from the cremation pure, or ash of the tips of the ears and tongue and of the nails of the corpse (cut prior to interment or cremation), or if neither of these is available, the ash of ground cowry shells (representative of human bone). Next, the *pla* is wrapped in cloth to resemble clothing: white for a deceased man and black and red print for a woman. The *pla* is symbolically sought out and captured from the *mo* affines by the shamans in a ritual dance which depicts the shamans successfully wresting control over the supernatural. From that time until the conclusion of *pai*, the *pla* is the centre of all attention.

The emotions evoked by the *pla*, imbued as it is with the spirit of the deceased, are considerable and impressive. It is important, furthermore, as the focal point of mediation between the shaman and the deceased. Pignède (1966:348-349) describes its importance to the living:

> I do not believe it distorts Gurung thought to say that the *plah (pla)* makes the dead person alive in the eyes of the onlookers. It affirms the life of the dead person. The deceased is there in the middle of everybody. The widow huddles at the foot of the *plah*, overcome by grief. She seizes the *plah* and, in a voice filled with sobs, cries out: 'Why have you left us?... Stay with us ... Don't leave!' All those watching feel this presence of the deceased. The *pae (pai)* takes the form of a dramatic dialogue between the dead person and the priests and, more generally, the onlookers.

The several responsibilities of the *khepr̃e* shaman during *pai*

are to ensure the happiness and contentment of the deceased, to keep him from further influence of malicious spirits, and to instruct and guide him safely on his way to *lanãs*. In the recitation of certain myths, the *khepr̃e* requests the deceased to leave his good fortune and old age and never to return as a malignant spirit to haunt his living fellows.

Finally, at the conclusion of *pai* the *pla* is carried to the edge of the village. There, at dusk on the final day, following long hours of exhausting ritual participated in by laymen and shamans alike, the shaman (either *khepr̃e* or *pajyu*, or both) perform a dramatic séance. He seeks to control and expel the forces of evil which might block the way to *lanãs*. The shaman physically chases the evil off the path into the dark forest, and the spirit of the deceased is then free to depart. The *pla* is summarily destroyed and the *pai* is over. (This final act is called *pai leb*, 'to cast *pai* away', or *pai pāb*, 'to bury *pai*') (G).

At a point immediately preceeding the destruction of the *pla*, the *pai* rituals for a *khepr̃e* shaman *guru* take a significant departure from those for a layman.[16] The difference in ritual sets the shaman *guru* distinctly apart from a common layman and it is extraordinarily rich in symbolism.

Throughout a *khepr̃e* guru's *pai*, a small forest bird called *nokr̃e* (G)[17] is kept caged in a prominent position over the *pla*. The ultimate climax of the guru's *pai* is the release of this bird and its flight back into the nearby forest. Above the cage is fixed a tall bamboo. Following the long recitation of myths which relate various hunting scenes, the bird's cage is opened at the top, adjacent to the bamboo stalk. A hush falls over the crowd as the bird emerges. The bamboo is symbolic of a ladder into the sky, upon which the spirit of the deceased ascends. The crowd, and especially the guru's successor(s), is especially pleased if the bird ascends the bamboo in ladder fashion, one limb at a time. At each progressive movement of the bird up the bamboo toward the top joyous exclamations are heard from the crowd, and drums and cymbals are beaten to add to the clamour. The greatest moment is when the bird, having perched on the tip of the bamboo, at last flies off into the haven of the forest. This signals not only the successful and unimpeded journey of the guru's spirit to the afterlife in *lanãs*, but also that the *guru* has successfully bequeathed his mystical power and efficacy as a shaman to his immediate successor who has overseen the *pai* ceremonies. At the moment of flight from the bamboo there is a great cry from the awestruck crowd, as they surge toward the guru's ritual heir to embrace him. (It is considered a dark and foreboding sign if the bird should die in the cage. And if the bird flies directly from the cage into the forest without ascending the bamboo stalk the greatness of the guru's ritual heir, the new shaman *guru*, is questioned.)

On the day following the completion of the ritual obligations of *pai* of either layman or shaman *guru*, the shaman conducting the ceremonies performs a brief purification ritual in the house of the deceased for the kinsmen and the *mo* affines. They are then free of all impurity caused by their association with death and are released from the social prescriptions of mourning (both of which are very slight relative to Hindu practice and belief). Thereafter, the patrons of the *pai* prepare a great feast called *mhĩ du kai* (G), 'men together rice'. This feast is designed 'to please the affines' (*āsyõ phu̇ lab*) (G) and in a more general way honours all members of clans allied by marriage, all ritual specialists (including the astrologer who has determined the timings of the ritual acts throughout *pai*), and all other guests. This day of feasting and honouring is called *amel* (N), the day of 'disuniting' or of departure of all guests.[18]

Shamans' Other Duties

In addition to funerary rituals, other of the shamans' duties include curative rituals usually centering around the retrieval of wandering souls of the sick, which only the shaman can effect. (*Pajyu* healing practices are described in detail by Macfarlane 1972). Shamans are also called upon to placate and expel malignant spirits of the recently deceased for whom *pai* was either not yet performed or, if performed, was somehow ineffectual or incomplete. They also determine the cause of widespread illness, pestilence, and other afflictions which may occur in one or more neighbouring villages. If the spirit of a partícular ancestor is determined to be a cause, the shaman is thereafter responsible for officiating at periodic clan or village-wide rituals designed to placate that spirit.

In Ghaisu village the *kheprẽ* shaman *guru* is also responsible for rituals to please and appease certain forest gods, godlings, and related spirits of nature. On the occasion of the worship of neighbourhood gods recognized as Hindu, the same shaman performs as *pujāri* (N) or 'officiating priest' in lieu of a Brahman priest. In Ghanpokhara, and in other Gurung villages where Brahmans are locally available, shaman and Brahman ritual functions are quite separate and distinct.

At times, a shaman may be called upon to perform as an astrologer, although in many Gurung villages there are local *paĩḍi* whose roles are primarily to interpret horoscopes and to make strategic decisions for the timing of field work, herding, travel, and the like. When lightning or fire strikes and destroys property or injures or kills livestock or people, the shaman is called in to perform a ritual to return the flame to the heavens (*mĩ le sẽb*; *mĩ* = 'lightning, fire') (G).

The ecology of Gurung shamanism is one aspect of investigation which needs further intensive study. Certain floral and faunal materials are considered necessary for constructing both ephemeral and long-lasting shaman paraphernalia. The construction of the *pla* effigy of the deceased for use during *pai* celebrations is an example of the utilization of symbolic wood and leaves. Likewise, cow dung, blood, urine, and aromatic weeds are important in rites dealing with the capture and return of a sick man's wandering soul.

Reference to or use of particular geographic places or terrain is also important, particularly so in the course of recitations during *pai*, described earlier. A more complete study of Gurung shamanism in Lamjung District in particular must take into account the unique significance in local tradition of the proto-village of the Gurung ancestors, i.e. the village of Khhol and associated locales in the high forest of Lamjung Himal.

The Gurung shaman is essentially apolitical, but in his other roles as householder, clansman, property owner, farmer, and villager he often becomes embroiled in political affairs which reflect and/or influence his role as a ritual specialist. At Ghanpokhara, for example, the shamans have been challenged to discontinue blood sacrifices by a combined religious-political reform movement led by certain outstanding members of the lay community. The reformist stance of the laymen reflects the Hindu influences to which they have been attracted. In Ghaisu village, the *khepr̃e* shaman has become a pawn in a dispute over relative social and political status of members of the Char Jat and the Sora Jat (Messerschmidt n.d.). In that instance, the *khepr̃e guru* was prohibited from performing ritual of any kind for Char Jat clients or face censure and fine by his own Sora Jat council of chiefs. This condition lasted for a period of many months at the height of a local inter-Jat conflict. Under normal circumstances, the shaman performs a variety of personal, family, lineage, and clan rituals mostly to do with life crises events for members of both Jats indiscriminantly, as well as rituals of a wider village or vicinal significance in which both Jats freely participate.

Conclusions

The foregoing comments and observations are those of an ethnographer with interests primarily in facets of Gurung life other than religion, and it is obvious that much of Gurung shamanism remains to be investigated and documented. In particular, the supernatural conceptual world of the shamans has not been explicated or adequately described. Perhaps with the translations from Gurung and French of many shaman myths reportedly collected by both Bernard Pignède and Alan Macfarlane, more complete answers and insights will be forthcoming. A few indications of the shamans' cognitive view of nature and of the supernatural have been

offered here (and by Pignède and Macfarlane elsewhere). Furthermore, the shamans' conceptions are closely related to both Bon and Buddhist thought, as well as to some Hindu and other pre-Hindu tribal beliefs. Nonetheless, the precise configuration of beliefs have yet to be documented and published. When they are, the comparative approach to shamanism in the Himalaya and elsewhere will be greatly enhanced.

Other questions arise to which the answers are only partly hinted at or not discussed at all. For example, the basic definition of Gurung shamanism is still unclear. Allen's (1974a) interpretation of the 'ritual journey' among the Thulung Rai of East Nepal is similar to our own interpretation of the Gurung shaman journey, and it is apparently similar to that of the Limbu (Jones, personal communication). It is a metaphoric journey, symbolic and perhaps reminiscent of an earlier era when the shaman *guru* forefathers were somehow superior, more powerful, and more efficacious in controlling and communing with the supernatural world. The allusion to the bird and the use of the drum, often interpreted as an instrument of flight, as well as the progressive mention of certain funerary geography along a given route, are all indicative of the ecstatic journey, however conceived. But possession, usually attributed to shamans (Eliade 1964) is absent from those manifestations of Gurung shamanism documented so far. Eventually, perhaps, an even fuller documentation of Himalayan religious phenomena of this nature will not only improve our understanding and appreciation of shamanism locally, but may revolutionize and restructure current thought on the subject far more widely.

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This paper is based on original research among the Gurung of northern Lamjung District, Nepal. It was generously supported by a grant from the U.S. Public Health Service Institutes of Health (NIH Grant No. 5 T01 GMO 1382-07 (BHS)), through the Department of Anthropology, University of Oregon. The author is indebted to Nareshwar Jang Gurung and Komal Ghaley for their assistance in the field and to Dr. Rex Jones for his comments on an earlier draft.

1. There are pockets of Gurung emigrants in other regions of Nepal and in north India. For the most part they have lost touch with traditional Gurung culture and do not speak the Gurung language. They are not considered here.

2. It is derived from the term *khhrõ* (G) meaning 'headman', 'chief', 'foremost', or 'principal', and the Gurung plurative suffix *-mai*. Reasons for calling the fourth ranked Lamichane clan 'chiefs' are discussed at length elsewhere (Messerschmidt n.d.).

3. Subordination of the Sora Jat to the Char Jat in theory and practice has been openly contended for some time. For examples see the author's dissertation (Messerschmidt n.d.).

4. The spellings in the text represent central Gurung terminology. Alternate spellings are *pucu* and *klihbrĩ* by Pignède (1966) for western Gurung and *poju* and *klevri* by Macfarlane (1972), also western Gurung. *Khepreẽ* is rendered as *ghyabre* by the Nepali anthropologist Dor Bahadur Bista (1967).

5. Certainly there are some momentous questions to be answered regarding the nature and degree of relationship between the triad of religious beliefs and practices formed by Bon, shamanism, and Tibetan Buddhism or Lamaism.

6. Pignède's informants called the same or a similar personage *ri-mai-cyõ* (G) meaning 'sister' or 'woman' (1966:296).

7. Pignède (1966:293) also refers to four types of *pajyu* shamans who are categorized according to the cardinal directions.

8. Pignède renders *lehṁai* alternately as *lehṁe*, *lehṁẽ*, and *lehgẽ* (1966:178-9; 1962:114). In Lamjung District the ancestors of this clan, locally called *lehgĩ*, are said to have been metalworkers in the proto-Gurung village of Khhol (the ruins of which lie in the high northern forest of Lamjung Himal). The theme of the artisan-priest is common in South Asia, given the magico-religious significance of crafts (recognized, for example, in the 'worship' of metal implements and weapons during the annual Nepali Hindu festival of Dasaĩ (Dasharā in Hindi): see Dumont 1970:290)). The significance

of the Blacksmith-Priest is further exemplified in Hitchcock's (1967) account of the shamans (which he calls *jhãkri*) of Bhuji Khola, West Nepal.

9. Among the central Gurung of Lamjung District, the Tu clan is considered to be identical to the *khepr̃e* clan of the west.

10. Lupra (Klu-brag in Tibetan) is a village in the southern part of Lo (Mustang), a region north of Thak Khola on the upper Kali Gandaki River. Lupra lies about five miles east-north-east of Jomosom at 82° 48' N., 28° 47' E. It is a village of particular importance to *khepr̃e* shamanism as the home of their original *guru* and as the source of their continuing inspiration. According to the Tibetologist David Snellgrove, 'Klu-brag, the oldest *bon* monastery in the district of Lo was founded by *bKra-shis rgyal-mtshan* (alias *'Gro-mgon Klu-brag-pa*) who was born about A.D. 1140' (1967:84n.).

There is a saying among the Gurung concerning the various sources of religious learning:

nār āturabsĩ lāmā āta, luprā āturabsĩ khepr̃e āta, siklĩ āturabsĩ pajyu āta.

The meaning, literally translated, is 'without going to Nar (in Manang District) lamahood cannot be attained, without going to Lupra khepr̃ehood cannot be attained, and without going to Siklis (in Kaski District) pajyuhood cannot be attained'.

11. In an interesting twist of this theme, a shaman informant in Ghaisu village who calls himself a *bāhra khepr̃e* relates that his lineage's forefather of ten generations ago gained so much power and wisdom at Lupra that his descendants are still able to inherit it directly and need not return for further enlightenment. It is interesting also that his lineage is not of the Tu or Khepre (*khepr̃e*) (G) clan, as might be expected, but of the Pajyu clan, an unexpected departure from the norm. He has even been heard to incorporate the legend of the Panyu shamaness, Chyangurani, into his own tradition. All of this leads one to suspect that his particular shaman tradition is an eclectic combination of both *pajyu* and *khepr̃e* shamanism. In actual practice, however, it is not uncommon for a *khepr̃e* to perform certain *pajyu* rituals when the latter is not available (particularly in the context of the post-funerary memorial rites of *pai*). In northern Lamjung District where *pajyu* shamans are relatively scarce anyway, this is a way of maximizing more options in controlling the supernatural.

12. For further discussion and pictures of shaman paraphernalia see Pignède (1966:293-298) and plates 67-71.

13. All English translations from Pignède's work in French (1966) are adapted from an unpublished translation by Alan D. J. Macfarlane. Responsibility for their correctness is this author's and not Dr. Macfarlane's.

14. Gurung informants say that *pai* is a sort of great gift bestowed by them upon the deceased. (They often say so-and-so *pai thob*, i.e. so-and-so 'receives (as a gift) *pai*'). The *pai* is at once commemorative and preparatory, allowing the spirit of the deceased to finally depart from the environment of earth and of evil demons of the underworld who have harrassed him since death, to join the ancestors at *lanãs*, the 'village of the gods'. They also speak of 'he who is capable (or incapable) of carrying the burden of *pai* upon his head' (*pai krab thuwādakyā (āthubai) mhĩ*). The role of the officiating shaman is to mediate between the living and the dead, to clear the way of all forces of evil which might block the path or otherwise endanger the deceased, and in general to ease the burden and please the deceased.

Quite possibly the term *pai* is derived from or related to the Persian *biaram*, 'festival' (Eliade 1964:208n.). Gurung *pai* is frequently referred to as *arghun* among Nepāli speakers.

The custom of honouring the dead is also found among Tibetan Buddhists in neighbouring Himalayan regions. David Snellgrove (1957:262ff.) refers to a post-funerary ceremony among Sherpas and Tibetans as 'guiding the consciousness after death' which in many details is identical to Gurung *pai*. Snellgrove insists that the practice is non-Buddhist. It is most likely pre-Buddhist and hence related to Bon and shamanism, in which case it demonstrates an intimate interrelationship of belief, form, and practice between the three religious forms.

15. In Gurung, *tho seba* means 'to kill the sacrificial animal', and is derived from *tho* meaning 'sacrificial animal' and *seba* 'to kill'. In Nepāli, the analogous term is *kāṭmār*, from *kāṭnu*, 'to cut', and *marnu*, 'to kill'.

16. Having never witnessed a *pajyu* guru's *pai* I cannot say with certainty that the *kheprẽ* guru's *pai* rituals described here would apply to a *pajyu guru*.

17. The *nokrẽ* bird is identified as one of several varieties of Babbler, a bird common to Himalayan forests.

18. *Amel* is sometimes also called *amĩn*, after the Christian term *amen*, 'so be it'.

XII

PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE GOD MAṢṬĀ

In the past 12 years or so, mention has been made on various occasions, of the existence of a god called Maṣṭā in Western Nepal. The Yogi Narhari Nath (1956, II, 1:108, 137, 223, 367, 318; II, 2: 13; 1965:578, 585) writes of his presence on both banks of the Karnali, Snellgrove (1961:19-20, 23, 27-29, 57; 1966:113-115) notes his existence in the regions of Jajarkot and Tibrikot,[1] and K. B. Bista has recognized him as the *kuldevatā* of several Chetri families, natives of the region of Jumla.[2] All these references indicate that he is an important divinity. I undertook two visits to the drainage basin of the Karnali (October-December 1967 and April-May 1968)[3] in order to gather information of the god Maṣṭā. I was quickly led to remark that he was not the only important divinity of the area: Mahabhaya and Jaganāth between Dailekh and Jumla,[4] Guro in the districts of Mugu and Humla, Ṭhākurnāthjī between Jumla and Jajarkot[5] and Kailas in Kunda Khola all offer numerous resemblances with Maṣṭā, both in their mythology and the forms of their cults, and should be included in an overall study of the popular religions of the area. In this preliminary report[6] I will limit myself to Maṣṭā who is worshipped over a greater area. I will explain the main aspects of the institutions and beliefs associated with his cult, in order to give an idea of the popular religion in this part of Nepal.

His name is most frequently pronounced Maṣṭā which, in the archaic language of the West, is an honorific plural. The singular Maṣṭo is sometimes found and, in the districts of Dailekh and Jumla, we find the form Maṣṭa which is perhaps a reformation of Maṣṭo. The forms Maiṭhā or Maiṭho also exist.[7] Finally, in common usage, this god is often designated by the name of one of the principal shrines dedicated to him. Therefore, they say Bābiro Maṣṭā or simply Bābiro; it is the same with Buḍu, Thārpā, Kavā ...

According to the legends I gathered in Jumla, this god came from a place called Dhadar near Bajhang and in fact, the native informants of this region maintain that the cult of Maṣṭā was prevalent there. However, in the districts of Accham and Doti, I was told that Maṣṭā was worshipped farther west as far as Mahakali and undoubtedly in the Indian districts beyond the border. Moreover, Jaya Maṣṭā is mentioned in Gadhwal.[8] I was personally able to study him closely in the districts of Doti, Accham and Bajura,

A *dhāmī* (left) and *pujāri* (right) of the *kālā sila* Maṣṭa at Bināyak in Western Nepal wearing ceremonial dress and holding silver utensils and implements belonging to the god

west of the Karnali and in the districts of Mugu, Jumla and Dailekh east of the river. Snellgrove attests to his existence in the districts of Jajarkot and Tibrikot. Temples are also erected in his honour in the district of Sallyan.[9] The cult of Maṣṭā as a village divinity with organized shrines seems to end there, at the border of Magar country. Farther east, he is found only as a family divinity *(kuldevatā)* among the Brahman or Chetri who brought him along in their migration east. The cult of Maṣṭā may therefore be considered to be co-extensive in the drainage basins of the Karnali and Mahakali rivers, an area I will henceforth refer to as Western Nepal.

Geographically, this region is quite varied. The districts of Dailekh, Accham and Doti are in the 'Middle-land', at low altitudes, with valleys where malaria is rampant. Towards the north, on the other hand, mountain chains of altitudes more than 10000 feet must be crossed in order to reach the districts of Jumla, Bajura and Bajhang with their high valleys. In these regions, rice is grown up to 8250 feet (Sinja); above this only wheat and barley are found. It is the population that constitutes the unifying factor in this area. There are practically no so-called tribal groups;[10] instead, the population consists of a Nepāli-speaking society in its purest form, strictly observing Hinduism and governed by the caste system. At the top of the hierarchy are the Brahman, then the royal caste of Thakuri *(ṭhakurī)*. These are the priests and kings, above the masses of Khas (called Chetri for the last century). The Thakuri are not all of the same status: some have the right to the sacred thread *(janai)* and are called *tāgādhārī*; others, of a lower status, may not wear it and do not observe the tabus concerning the consumption of chicken and alcohol. The latter are called *matvālī*, alcohol drinkers. At approximately the same level in the hierarchy as the Chetri but different from them, are the populations associated with the sects of ascetics; the Samnyasi *(saṃnyāsi)* of the order of Dasnam *(dasnām)*,[11] and the Kanphata *(kānphātā)* Jogi,[12] disciples of Gorakhnāth. For the most part, they are not celibate and as a result have formed two truly endogamous castes.[13] All these castes are considered to be pure and as a group are contrasted with the impure servant castes. The latter, with the exception of a tiny minority of Moslem bracelet sellers, the Curaute *(curauṭe)*, are Untouchables and collectively referred to by the term *ḍum*.[14] In decreasing order of their status, the *ḍum* include the Kami (*kāmī*, the true artisans), the Sarki (*sārkī*, tanners), the Damai (*damāi*, musicians and tailors), the Gaine (*gāine*, minstrels) and the Badi (*bādī*, dancers).[15] I found followers of Maṣṭā in all these castes, except among the Samnyasi although Snellgrove (1961:28) has found some there.[16] However, the most well-known shrines are those of the Matvali Chetri which may possibly indicate that the god is specifically associated with this caste.

The establishment of this population in the region may be traced as far back as the Malla dynasty.[17] Documents as early as the XIVth century show the Brahman as the highest class of the society. Along with Hinduism, Buddhism was practiced until the end of the 15th century, (Tucci 1956:41), after the disintegration of the Malla Kingdom into various principalities. In this context, how far back can we trace the cult of Maṣṭā? A chronicle, drafted by the present raja of Bajhang states: 'Sakti Singh became king in 1365 (1308 A.D.) ... It is since the time of this king Sakti Singh that the god Maṣṭā has been worshipped.' (Nahari Nath 1965: 585) The author does not cite the documents on which he bases this assertion and it can legitimately be questioned. A more reliable text is from the region of Jumla, dated *sāke* 1547 (1627 A.D.) which speaks of Bhuvānī (for Bhavānī) and Maṣṭā as witnesses to a transaction (Nahari Nath 1956, II, 1:137). Further proof is given by an official document from Binayak, dated V.S. 1863, month of Caitra (March-April 1807 A.D.) where the local authority confirms a donation of land offered to Kālā Silā Maṣṭā by the former 'kings of Accham'.[18] The cult of Maṣṭā was therefore firmly established in this region before it was annexed, between 1785 and 1788, by the present dynasty of Gorkha kings.

How do worshippers conceive of their divinity? The legends I gathered give us a general idea:[19]

	Place of recording	Caste of the narrator	Caste of the *dhāmi*
A. Maṣṭā of Buḍu	Sinja	Thakuri	Chetri
B. Baṭphal Maṣṭā of Sinja	Sinja	Thakuri	Kami
C. Khapar Maṣṭā of Gum	Gum	Thakuri	Thakuri
D. Maṣṭā of Thārpā	Gum	Thakuri	Chetri
E. Kālā Silā Maṣṭā of Bināyak	Bināyak	Chetri	Chetri
F. Dāre Maṣṭā of Ukhāḍi	Ukhāḍi	Brahman	Brahman
G. Dudhe Silā Maṣṭā of Dāhā̃	Dahā̃	Thakuri	Thakuri

These legends come from various castes but regardless of their origin, the main themes remain the same, which clearly indicates that all the groups share the same beliefs. Since I cannot analyze them here in detail, I will only point out the main ideas of these legends.

It all begins with the birth of Maṣṭā. Son of Indra, the king of the gods, he appears on earth at Dhadar: 'I was born at Dhadar, I received orders from my father Indra' he says in legend F. This theme, scarcely mentioned in other legends, is developed in detail

in the legend G: the god travels through the skies and the principal shrines in Northern India from Kashmir to *ḍhãdār*.

There, in Dhadar, he meets the Nine Goddesses, the Nine Durgā Bhavānī, who are adopted as his 'sisters' and henceforth associated with Maṣṭā. From this time on, Maṣṭā is no longer represented as a single god but as an association of Twelve (or, west of the Karnali, Eighteen) 'Brothers'. This is an ideal rather than a real number for no one can list more than 6 or 7 names and the lists themselves are substantially different from each other. Moreover, in place of the names of the various divinities, the lists often cite the principal shrines of the area in question. Based on the legends alone, it is therefore impossible to discover whether there is actually one or several divinities. It is only by observing the ceremonies that we will be able to answer this question. The same problem exists with respect to the Bhavānī. It is said that there are 9 of them because this is the traditional number in Hinduism. However, the lists given do not correspond to the classical list and refer mainly to the principal shrines known to the informants, such as Tripura, Sundari,[20] Kanak Sundari,[21] Mālikā.[22]

This multiplicity of gods introduces another theme, namely, the dividing of the territory. The Twelve Maṣṭā Brothers share the region and establish, among themselves, an order of priority that is based either on their respective ages (legend D), or more often, on a type of political organization (king, minister, etc.). As is common among brothers, the question is not settled without quarrels, since some try to take their brothers' shares (legend C).

Once they have been established in their areas, each of the Brothers tries to protect his own territory. He must fight ogres and giants, *rākṣas* and *dānava*, who threaten everyone, from gods on down. 'In the village of Okharpata, there is a Bhavānī named Nadālnī. A *rākṣas* named Lakhyāl tried to slur the reputation of the goddess. Buḍu Maṣṭā summoned Bāṭphal Maṣṭā and appointed him to kill this *rākṣas*. He arrived, fought against Lakhyāl and killed him' (legend B). In Thārpā (legend D) the story is told of an ogre who built a swing to attract children. He let them play all day and at night took one or two of them away to eat them. Maṣṭā rid the country of him. He eliminates all the *rākṣas* and *dānava* in the following way: each time he eviscerates the monster and takes from his body either his entrails, which are supposed to be preserved in a shrine as a symbol of the god's power (legends B and D), or a bell called *jyu-ghãt* that may represent the god in the shrine. Firmly established after these struggles, Maṣṭā protects the gods and men from evil spirits, dishonest merchants, thieving or aggressive Tibetans or even from the authorities. He is surrounded by a following of subordinate divinities, the *bāhan*, (from the Sanskrit: *vāhan*, vehicle or porter) who faithfully execute his orders. In addition he establishes alliances with the

other divinities in the vicinity. If he is sometimes called Ksetrapāl Maṣṭā, it is hardly by accident: this name best summarizes his role as a defender of the territory.[23]

Thus far as we have seen, the legends closely follow classical patterns, particularly those of the *purāṇa*, which explain the birth of the gods, their struggle against demons and the establishment of shrines. The final theme, which is also the most widely developed, more specifically accounts for the existence of the local cult.

It is told how the first man was possessed by the god and how he became the first *dhāmi (dhāmī)* of the shrine. A list of all the *dhāmi* is given with the events that marked their careers during the last generations. A god remains in a given place only if he is properly worshipped; otherwise he goes somewhere else. Thus it is said, the Maṣṭā who currently resides in Thārpā, on the north bank of the Mugu Karnali, was previously in another village on the south bank. But the *dhāmi*'s wife was greedy and concerned only with profiting from the pilgrims' offerings without giving them the proper hospitality. Therefore, at the time of the *dhāmi*'s death, the god left the village, appeared in the dreams of the ferrymen who helped him cross the river and settled where he presently resides (legend D).

These legends enable us to see how the god's presence is conceived. For us, as outsiders, this is merely a list of possessed oracles *(dhāmi)* who succeed one another at a particular shrine. But for the believer who tells these stories, it is the god himself who takes the initiative, who moves from one place to another and selects the oracles. He first reveals himself to the latter by premonitions: in Buḍu, for example, he appeared in the form of a Yogi leper to a certain Mede Buḍā who received him one night in his home. The following morning the Yogi had disappeared but reappeared the next evening in a dream where he ordered the construction of a temple. Then finally he came to possess Mede Buḍā (legend A). The god's appearance in a visible form is therefore only a preliminary step: the god becomes firmly established by taking possession of an oracle, by assuming a body in which he becomes 'incarnated', whereas farther east it is said that the god climbed onto someone's body, where the term 'avatār' is used. This term, in Hindu tradition, is used to designate the descent towards earth, the embodiment of a god, Viṣṇu for example. They use the expression *phalāno māthi avatār linu*, to become embodied in someone. This has been contracted to the verb *autinu*, to become incarnate.[24] At the time of the ceremonies, as we shall see farther on, the *dhāmi* acts as if he were the god himself.

In the legends, Maṣṭā therefore appears as a protecting god. Always accompanied by his Nine Sisters and a suite of servants, Maṣṭā settles in a given location by becoming embodied in an oracle.

The organization of the shrines and their personnel provide us with other details. A distinction must be made between the main shrines and the affiliated branches established in the neighbouring villages. The number of main shrines is impressive. The one housing the principal divinities (one or several Maṣṭā and one or more Bhavānī) is always divided in two for the needs of the ceremony. A first edifice, in the village itself, is used for the ceremonies on ordinary days. It is called *ghar mā̃ḍu*, temple of the house[25] and sometimes *deuḍo* or *nāryā*. The second structure is located on the slope of the mountain above the village, often rather close as in Thārpā and Bābiro, sometimes very far away on the mountain peak, as in Bināyak. This structure is called *ban mā̃ḍu*, temple of the forest, and it is used four times a year for the full-moon festivals. Both are made of the same elements:

- a place where the divinities are supposed to reside that can be a mere niche (in Thārpā), a platform with a bell (in Babiro) or stones (in Bināyak). Offerings and sacrifices are made there at the time of *pūjā*;
- a hearth *(kuṇḍa)* for the fire sacrifice *(hom)* performed by a Brahman;
- finally a 'throne' *(gādī)*[26] where the *dhāmi* sits while possessed. The construction varies according to the regions: east of the Karnali, it consists of a raised platform of earth, that will be covered with a simple cover or a rug or even with furs; west of the Karnali, it is always a wooden platform more than 20 inches high.

The arrangement of these three elements is basically the same. The divinities are always at the back with the hearth in front of them. The *gādī* may be placed between the gods and the hearth, as in Thārpā, but it is most often located farther forward under a porch roof of the temple (Bābiro), in front of the temple (Ukhāḍi) or even rather far off to the side (west of the Karnali).

A few examples will give an idea of the architecture and the interior layout. The *ghar mā̃ḍu* of Thārpā is a rather small structure of stone with columns and framework made of sculptured wood. The first room, opening through columns toward the east and south, has a hearth for the sacred food and will ultimately be used to lodge the pilgrims. A low narrow door leads to the second room where Maṣṭā and Kālikā, the two main divinities, are sheltered in the niches located in the back of the room on the right and left. A little farther forward is the *gādī*, covered by a copper canopy *(canduvā)*. In front of the *gādī* is the hearth *(kuṇḍa)* for the sacrifices. It is in this second room that the *pūjā* are performed and the oracles are consulted. Two masts *(liṅgā)* rise above the temple. Hanging from the masts (and typical of this region) are streamers of white cloth *(dhvajā)*, a yak's tail *(cũvar)* and a wooden bird; the latter, that I saw nowhere but in Thārpā, seems to have a purely decorative function.

The *ban-mãḍu* of Bābiro is one of the most impressive I saw. It is reached from the village by a huge staircase of more than 350 crudely cut stone steps that lead to a sort of esplanade on which the temple is erected. The temple is made entirely of wood. Massive pillars, naively sculptured support a roof made of tree trunks split lengthwise in two that cover the entire structure from the ridge of the roof to the ground. At the back is the shrine itself where only the personnel of the temple may enter. In the centre of the shrine is a platform where the golden bell representing Maṣṭā is placed. To the left is the niche where Bhavānī resides and where the young goats are sacrificed. To the right is the storeroom where the implements of the cult are kept. The hearth is a little farther toward the front, in the centre. A wooden partition, standing half way to the ceiling, separates room 3 from room 2, which is an area where the worshippers gather and which contains a hearth for the sacred food. These two rooms are reached by a low door that opens onto the entry hall where the *gādī* is located. Near the *gādī* and against the back wall, stand several dozen wooden statues. The facade of the hall opens onto the esplanade where the orchestra of Damai plays and where the troupe of possessed *dhāmi* dance.

The architecture varies from one district to another. Depending on the region, either wood or stone predominates; sculpturing may be totally absent. The only common feature is the wooden roof which is reserved only for temples and is not found in domestic architecture. The wooden statues are in no way essential to all the cults of Maṣṭā. Coming from the west toward Jumla along the Tila Nadi, they appear for the first time in Nagma, a day's walk before Tatopani. From there, they stretch toward the east as far as Tibrikot and also, I was told, toward the south in the direction of Jajarkot. They are not found very far towards the north; they are, for example, entirely absent in the region of Thārpā. The statues are made by the Untouchables, mainly the Cundara (turners) but also by other types of Kami. The Kami give them as votive offerings to thank the divinities for their blessings,[27] whereas people of pure castes offer more valuable gifts such as bells, copper utensils for the cult, etc. The informants are very reluctant to speak in detail about these statues which generally represent male individuals, often armed with guns, and sometimes women. I was told that they symbolize the donors. This is most probably true since these statues are not worshipped. The information gathered by Tucci (1956: 38-39) seems to lead to the same conclusion whereas Snellgrove (1961:28) considers the statues to be representation of secondary divinities, perhaps *bāhan*.

The subordinate divinities, the *bāhan*, are worshipped rather far away from the main shrines, usually outside the village. There are no edifices but merely an altar made of a stone on which the sacrificer immolates his victims. The altar is marked by red and white strips of cloth *(dvajā)* attached to surrounding shrubs by

the worshippers. In the organization of the shrines, the principal divinities are therefore emphasized whereas the secondary divinities, relegated outside the village, are given only minimal attention.

The religious services in the shrine are divided among several officiating priests. There are always at least two priests; the possessed oracle *(dhāmi)* and the actual priest *(pujārī)*. It is possible for the same person to perform both functions but in this case, it is clearly pointed out that at one time he acts as a priest and at another time as an oracle.

The *dhāmi* is the 'keystone' of the shrine. It is he whom the divinity has chosen as an embodiment. He goes into a trance at certain times and the worshippers may directly question the god who speaks through his mouth. Since he is chosen by the divinity, his function cannot be hereditary; at his death, they wait for another man to fall into a trance. Actually, the divinity rarely chooses outside the deceased's lineage but he may bypass direct descendants in favour of distant relatives. As an embodiment of the divinity, the *dhāmi* is not trained by a master. The sign of his calling is the trance; he is asked only to prove this calling by performing a 'miracle'. They ask him, for example, to move an object using only a magic formula, to twist an iron bar with his bare hands, to change a handful of rice into some other object (*saligram*, statue, etc.), to recite the Veda by heart without having learned them, and being totally illiterate (Thārpā).[28] These miracles may ultimately enable the worshippers to choose between several candidates, all of whom are possessed.

The most striking feature of the *dhāmi* is a very long tuft of hair *(laṭṭā)* starting at the top of his head. It may be more than 3 feet in length and is often wound in a silver or even gold thread (as in Bināyak). One might wonder if it is not in part false, but it goes without saying that, from the believers' point of view, it is indeed real hair. It is because of this that they have the name *jhãgaryā* or *jhãgre* meaning 'he who grew a long tuft of hair' *(laṭṭa paleko)*. The word may be compared with *jagri* or *jagaria*, terms that Hutton encountered in the North-Western Province of India.[29] This relationship between possession and long hair is found in Central Nepal. During a sabbath, a sorceress, or a woman possessed by a sorceress, takes down her hair, *(jhãkro phĩjãunu)*. A contemporary author describes the trance of Jayaprakash Malla's wife in the 18th century as follows: 'In the middle of the night, the queen got up, awoke the king and, sitting cross-legged with her hair hanging, began to tremble' (Sijapati 1957:14).[30] The word for long hanging hair is *jhãkro*; from this comes the adjective *jhãkre*[31] meaning 'he who lets down his long hair'. This word may be a variation of *jhãgarya*,[32] and the word *jhãkri* used to designate the 'shaman' of Central Nepal may be - in a context of somewhat different institutions - related to the *jhãgaryā* of the West. The

dhāmi's tuft of hair is rolled at the top of the head and covered with a turban. It is characteristic of the *dhāmi* to untie his turban during a trance in order to let down his hair. The *dhāmi*, particularly in regions west of the Karnali, often wears enormous silver bracelets which have been given to him by generous worshippers.

The *dhāmi* must observe strict rules of purity in deference to the divinity he embodies: he is careful not to eat any impure food and avoids wearing dirty clothes. At the time of a trance, for which he prepares by fasting, he must remove his pants, considered to be impure clothing, and wear only a loin cloth under his long woollen jacket (wool is considered more pure than cotton). There are certain impurities he cannot, however, avoid, such as those resulting from a birth or a death in the family. At these times, the *dhāmi* is not permitted to go into a trance. The *dhāmi* are more or less observant depending on their shrine. The *dhāmi* of Thārpā is truly exemplary: he is authorized to marry but does not work; he is careful about his food and never wears pants; he never leaves the village but remains there entirely devoted to his god and his numerous and generous consultants who guarantee him a comfortable existence.

The other religious functions are strictly hereditary. The priest is in charge of the actual cult; he purifies the temple and presents the worshippers' offerings to the gods. He is usually called *pujārī*, the general name for priests in charge of a temple. In the district of Jumla, he is called a *ḍẽgrī*. This word is interesting because it appears to be the same as *dungariya*, encountered by Atkinson (1884) in the North Western Provinces but with the meaning of 'person possessed' by a god.[33] The same word *ḍẽgre* or *ḍaṅgre* designates a *dhāmī* in Central Nepal, especially a *dhāmī* possessed by a ghost *(vāyū)*.[34] In Bābiro the function is shared: a *pujārī* performs *pūjā* and a *ḍẽgri* is confined to the role of sacrifices.

The names of the other functions change from one shrine to another. There is often a *khāvā*, as in Thārpā and Ukhāḍī. This word which is not found in dictionaries, means 'interpreter' in common usage.[35] The 'interpreter' can sometimes translate the enigmatic words of the *dhāmi* for the worshippers, but he is primarily an intermediary who presents the worshippers' offerings to the *dhāmi*. As in Ukhāḍī, there is also a *kaṭhāyat* in charge of distributing the sacrificial remains, a *phulpāte* who brings the offerings for the *pūjā* and a *daphe* (Bināyak) whose role I was unable to clearly ascertain. Although these functions vary from one shrine to another, the important point is that there is always a complex organisation. The informants from Thārpā expressed this by a comparison: 'At least three stones are needed to construct a hearth'. In legend F Maṣṭā says: 'the trance of the *dhāmi*, the interpretation of the *khāvā*, the sharing of the *kaṭhāyat*, the family of (the) Sijapati

Bhandari as *pujārī*, these are the four fortresses I built'.

These three or four officials are in reality the administrators of the shrine and are almost always of the same lineage. The functions are transmitted, as we have seen, either to direct descendants or sometimes, in the case of the *dhāmi*, to distant relatives, but they do not go beyond the family. The latter possesses the shrine as a sort of undivided heritage and plays the role of patron with relation to the other people who contribute to the workings of the shrine.

Let us consider first of all the personnel who serve the *bāhan*. Here also, there is a *dhāmi* and a *pujārī* but their organization is a simplified replica of the organization of the main temple.

Next we have the people who work with the principal officials. At the time of the full-moon festivals, the celebration of the *hom* necessitates the participation of a full-status Brahman who, by heredity, is associated with the lineage possessing the shrine. This lineage is represented by the *dhāmi* and fulfills the traditional role of patron *(jajmān)*. The ceremonies cannot be performed without the appropriate music. Contrary to the *jhākri* of Central Nepal, the *dhāmi* has no drum and in general, the people of pure castes in the West play no musical instruments. In order to furnish this music, they must therefore call upon the Damai,[36] the untouchable musicians linked by heredity to the shrine. With kettledrums and sometimes trumpets and cymbals, they accompany the ceremonies and the oracles as they go into a state of trance. They have a distinct rhythm *(ghāī)* for each of the gods that possess the different *dhāmi*. If there is a fund for the maintenance of the shrine (as in Bināyak), Brahman and musicians are entitled to a share of the income;[37] otherwise they are either paid in cash or they receive a share of the worshippers' offerings.

In a sense, the lineage possessing the shrine plays the role of the dominant caste, served by the Brahmans and Damai. The latter are the clients, and thus the temple organization appears as an extension of the caste relationships existing in the village. The relationship between the patron and his client, who may be a Brahman as well as a Damai, is traditional throughout Nepal. However, the characteristic feature of the temples of Maṣṭā or of other similar divinities in the West, is the institution of the *dhāmi*, regularly associated with the temple in the same way as the *pujārī*. This fact is attested to in the first official documents appearing after the annexion of the region by the current dynasty[38] and was therefore already traditional at the end of the 18th century. But there is nothing comparable in Central Nepal. The only analogies we could find would again be farther West in the Indian districts. The Gazetteer of Kangra District, in enumerating the personnel of the shrine, mentions in addition to the *pujārī*, the musicians and various subordinates, the *gur* or *chela*, possessed oracles corresponding to our *dhāmi*; the latter is found almost everywhere.[39]

In the principal shrines, such as in Buḍu, Thārpā and Bābiro, we have seen an organization in the most highly developed state. If people living in other villages worship a particular Maṣṭā, or if they wish to thank him for some act of good will, they may build a temple in their own village. They ask permission of the priests in charge of the main shrine and take an object with them - in Thārpā they take a bell with a *dhvajā* - that they place in the new temple. A *pujārī* performs the ceremony and, since possession is a rather common occurrence in this part of the world, it is never long before one of the worshippers falls into a trance and becomes the *dhāmi*. He must however be recognized as *dhāmi* of the main shrine. He goes before the official *dhāmi* on the day of a full-moon festival and, while both are in a trance, the latter marks the new dhami's forehead with rice, *ṭika*, or may even hit him with a small bell. This is considered to be the seal *(chāp)* that makes him an officially recognized representative of the divinity. I was not fortunate enough to attend such a ceremony but it has been well described for the *dhāmi* of the god Thakurnāth. 'The echoes of the possessed dance began to be heard! Shouting "aha ahaha!" they began stamping their feet. After unrolling their tuft of hair to a length of 3 or 4 cubits the *dhāmi* fell into a trance. In another place, a middle-aged *dhāmini* also began trembling and shouting "aha! ahaha!" The *pujārī* of the temple said to them: "What do you ask for?" The *dhāmi* answered: "Give us the seal". Then the *pujārī* hit them on the head with the bell he had in his hand.'[40] It is thus that the affiliated temples - in Nepāli, they say 'branches' *(hāgo)* - of the main shrine are formed. The new *dhāmi* must return periodically to show their allegiance. The notoriety of a great shrine is based on the number of its affiliates, that may stretch to rather great distances: thus, there is a temple of Thārpā Maṣṭa in Micha Gaon (near the *stūpa* discussed by Tucci 1956:41) a good three days' walk from the main shrine. The temple of Bābiro mentioned by Snellgrove (1961:27, 28, 31; 1966:113-115) is probably associated with the shrine to Bābiro in Tatopani.

On ordinary days, the ceremonies are performed in the *ghar māḍu* of the village. As an example, I will describe the rituals observed in Thārpā on November 12, 1967. At about 8 in the morning, the worshippers are gathered in front of the temple and the Brahmans from Ukhāḍī begin reciting the Veda. Towards 9.30, the dhami's arrival is announced and a procession arrives from the centre of the village. The Damai lead the march playing the kettledrum. They are immediately followed by the *dhāmi*, wearing a long woollen jacket woven in the village and a turban. Then comes the *ḍāgri* and finally the *khāvā* who carries a tray containing rice and strips of red cloth. Some people from the village follow. The *dhāmi* enters the temple and lights incense and oil lamps in front of the divinities.

Then begins the possession séance with the consultation of the oracle called *dhamelo*.[41] The *dhāmi* goes into a state of trance:

he begins trembling and only then does he sit cross-legged on the *gādī*. This seat is not intended for the man he is in everyday life, but for the god he embodies during the possession. The *khāvā* sits on the ground to his right, and the *ḍẽgri* to his left. The *dhāmi* - or we should say the god since he is henceforth a god in the worshippers' eyes - gives his benediction to the noted visitors (including the ethnologist) by marking their foreheads with a *ṭikā* of rice and by attaching a strip of red cloth around their necks. Then, ringing a bell in each hand, he goes into a long recitation called *paḍhelī*. Speaking through the dhami's mouth in a slow and monotonous voice, the god relates his history. The worshippers may then ask their questions, but before each consultation, they must offer symbolic presents: a handful of rice or coins. They hand them to the *khāvā* who passes them to the god. The questions are then asked either directly or by the intermediary of the *khāvā*. The god answers through the *dhāmi*, by shouting enigmatic phrases. The séance (of which I have a tape recording) soon turns into total confusion, since each person tries to attract the god's interest to his own case, although the *dhāmi* has scarcely begun considering another's. The questions are jumbled together, the answers are directed to one then another, then come back to the first ... On this particular morning, there were four people asking questions. Droppings from a crow flying from the east fell on the head of one of the questioners. This is a bad omen and the harmful results must be averted, said the god, while throwing a handful of rice on a pile of stones dedicated to the goddess Deurālī,[42] at the mountain pass of Ghurchi ko Lekh. A widow is concerned about the future of her adolescent son, who is becoming more and more disobedient, but the god reassures her. A woman, who had come specially from Tibrikot, is possessed by a *maiyã*,[43] that is a 'ghost', the soul of a person who dies an accidental death. She herself falls into a trance. The 'ghost' who possesses her is ordered, by the god, to leave her. But this exorcism is unsuccessful; her pilgrimage to Thārpā is considered useless and she must appeal to another god. Finally two brothers arrive, Matvali Chetri, from the region of Chandha Bis Dara, just northeast of Jumla. We had walked with them for an entire day. They brought offerings of a colt, for the *dhāmi*, a young goat and a superb rooster ... in exchange for which they hoped that the god would settle an inheritance quarrel that had opposed them to each other for years. Their case occupied the god for the most part of the séance which lasted more than half an hour.

The *dhāmi* ends his trance by sprinkling himself with rice and leaves for the village, preceded by the Damai. The worshippers make their offerings and the *ḍẽgri* presents them to the divinities. Maṣṭā receives milk and rice cooked in milk. The young goats lie in front of the niche dedicated to the goddess Kālikā, and the *ḍẽgri* cuts their throats slowly to let the blood flow into the niche. This type of sacrifice is called *retne* - literally: to saw, to file - in contrast with *kaṯne* where the animal is standing and

his head is cut off with one blow of a knife on the neck. The divinity consumes only the blood; the meat is shared between the priests and worshippers ... The roosters, reserved for the *bāhan*, are taken away to be sacrificed at their altar outside the village.

The daily cult practice takes place in a similar way in all the shrines of Maṣṭā, with the possession séance at the beginning whenever there are people to ask questions.

Four main holidays a year are celebrated in the *ban mãḍu*. They always take place during a full moon but the months differ depending on the shrine.[44] As an example, I will describe the festival observed for the full moon of Kartik on November 15 and 16, 1967, in Bābiro. The first phase of the ceremony took place in the evening of the 15th. After dinner, the worshippers begin to flow in. Those who belong to a pure caste seek shelter in the central part of the temple and warm themselves by a wood fire since it is quite cold. The Damai, being Untouchables, are not admitted inside; they make a fire in front of the temple on the esplanade and begin to play kettledrums. The women begin a chant *(mangal)* in honour of Maṣṭā. Towards 11 o'clock, the *dhāmi* arrives on the scene and is soon seized with trembling which marks the beginning of the trance. He unrolls his turban and lets down his long tuft of hair. He gives a *ṭika* of rice first to the Damai, purifies himself by sprinkling water, and then gives a *ṭika* of rice to the assistants. Then he begins dancing to the sound of the kettledrums which are played faster and faster. The *dhāmi* of the *bāhan* soon come to join him and one after the other, they fall into a trance. The assistants help them remove their turbans and jackets. For a moment they place their heads on the chest of the *dhāmi* of Maṣṭā in order to be recognized by him and then begin to dance, overcome by very pronounced trembling. Little by little, they gain control and their movements become more relaxed. They wear neither costumes nor masks but one can recognize the god they embody by the way they play their roles since their dances are somewhat mimed. Two of them, respectively embodying Dhumā Gādī and Hanīkhole, play the role of *bāhan* in the literal sense of the word, that is vehicles for the main god: while dancing, they carry the principal god - embodied in his *dhāmi* - on their hip or shoulder. During their dance, each one will assume some behaviour that distinguishes him from the others. At certain times, Dhumā Gādī, the leader of all the *bāhan*, jumps into the fire lit by the Damai. Honīkhole jumps on a wooden post driven onto the esplanade and knocks it down. The worshippers set it upright and he begins again. *Lāṭi* - literally the deaf mute, but by extension, the 'idiot' - is first incarnated by a man who has a mark of vermillion in his hair, (a custom generally reserved for women), and impersonates an idiot. But later, *Lāṭi* is embodied in a woman who will join the dancers. The possessed dance continues until approximately midnight.

Then the *dhāmi* of Maṣṭā leaves the esplanade where the others

continue dancing and goes to the entry hall of the temple for consultation. He sits cross-legged on the *gādī* which has been purified and covered with a red rug and the skin of a musk-deer *(kasturī)*. In each hand he rings a small bell. Speaking through him, the god relates his own story, in a slow and monotonous voice, almost obscured by the noise of the bells and kettledrums. When this recitation *(paḍhelī)* is over the consultation begins. The worshippers ask questions and the god answers. Each worshipper leans his forehead against the edge of the *gādī* and the *dhāmi* hits him four times on the back with his tuft. This gesture is supposed to avert the evil spirits. He then puts rice on the worshipper's back and taps him here six to eight times with the bell. He makes him eat a handful of uncooked rice that he himself pours in the worshipper's mouth and finally puts a handful of dry rice in the latter's hand. The *dhāmi* of Maṣṭā then returns to join in the possessed dance that continues late into the night.

The following day the worshippers begin to arrive in the early afternoon, bringing their offerings (rice, wheat flour, young goats, roosters ...). They give them to the *ḍāgri* who seems quite concerned about the welfare of the shrine and who tries to obtain as much as possible, particularly from the representatives of the affiliated shrines.

The Brahman arrives and begins the sacrifice to fire *(hom)* at the back of the temple: he stands west of the fire, facing the east, that is, in the priest's usual place. Toward the south, the *pujārī*, who will eventually be replaced by the *dhāmi*, plays the role of patron *(jajmān)*. The sacrifice is performed according to the usual ritual. The offerings are placed in the fire while the vedic divinities are invoked, but at the end, the Brahman collectively invokes the Twelve Maṣṭā Brothers, to whom he attributes the Vāma Dera *gotra*.[45] Then he names five or six of them (without naming all 12) invokes the Nine Durgā Bhavānī and the *bāhan*. Next the *ārati* is performed, to the accompaniment of conches, bells and symbols. The Brahman gives a *ṭika* to the *pujārī* and the assistants, and ties the *raksā-bandhan*[46] around the wrist of the *pujārī* and the *dhāmi*. During the *hom*, the *pujārī* performed the *pūjā* to the divinities of the temple, to whom he offered rice, barley, symbolic clothing and money.

The *dhāmi* of Maṣṭā then falls into a state of trance. He goes out on the esplanade and distributes the *ṭika* beginning with the Damai. Then it all begins again, just like the previous evening, with the possessed dance, which lasts until nightfall. The young goats are sacrificed to Kālikā and the roosters to the *bāhan*. The priests in charge of the shrine and their clients take part in the celebration that lasts all night and part of the following day.

The full-moon festivals are celebrated in a similar way in the other shrines. On both banks of the Karnali, the same elements

are found: possessed dances where the divinities are mimed, consultations, sacrifices to fire (but in Thārpā they are performed by the *dhāmi* instead of the Brahman), and animal sacrifices.

In view of these ceremonies, what conclusions can we draw concerning the structure of the pantheon? Here, as in the legends and the organization of the shrines, there is a distinction between the principal gods, Maṣṭā and Bhavānī on one hand, and the subordinate gods, the *bāhan*, on the other.

The former are the centre of the cult. In the light of the ceremonies of Thārpā and Bābiro previously described, we have the impression that Maṣṭā is a vegetarian while Bhavānī eats meat. However, considering the data from other shrines, things are more complex. In the *ban māḍu* of Thārpā, there are two Bhavānī; Kālikā and Mālikā. The former eats meat while the latter is a vegetarian. According to the information I gathered at other shrines, it seems that the Bhavānī can be arranged in two categories: on the one hand, those who eat meat, such as Kālikā, Jālpā Devī ... on the other hand, the vegetarians such as Mālikā, Ambikā ... It is the same for Maṣṭā: in spite of the many names, that refer most often to the well-known shrines rather than to different divinities, we always find two forms, either disassociated in different shrines (district of Jumla), or associated in the same shrine (district of Dailekh and west of the Karnali). The vegetarian form is called Dudhe Maṣṭā, that is Maṣṭā (who nourishes himself) with milk, or Dudhe Silā Maṣṭā, which means Maṣṭā with a stone (the colour) of milk. The latter is represented by a white stone. The meat-eating form is called Kālā Silā Maṣṭā, Maṣṭā with a black stone, or sometimes Dāre Maṣṭā, Maṣṭā with (long) teeth. This last name alludes to a rite still practiced at times in places such as Ravatkot near Dullu. While in a trance, the *dhāmi* embodying Dāre Maṣṭā, is locked up alone in the temple. Since there are no witnesses, there can be no verification, but the *dhāmi* supposedly slits a goat's throat with his teeth and then leaves the temple in order to be seen drinking blood directly from the animal's severed throat. Elsewhere the rite has either entirely or partially disappeared. In Bināyak, for instance, the *dhāmi* is content to drink the blood of a victim killed with a knife, but legend reconstitutes and completes the rite: formerly, they say, he cut the animal's throat with his teeth, until one day, a despicable Kami put an iron bar in the victim's throat which broke the *dhāmi*'s teeth. From that time on, a knife must be used, the vegetarian/carnivorous contrast is therefore found in the case of Maṣṭā as well as Bhavānī. It is clear that this opposition can be used neither to differentiate the masculine from feminine divinities, nor to distinguish the main divinities from the secondary divinities or *bāhan*.

The characteristic feature of the *bāhan* is the nature of the victims whose blood they consume. The principal divinities accept only the blood of young goats, noble animals eaten even by Brahmans,

in this country where there are no vegetarians. The *bāhan*, on the other hand, drink the blood of roosters, impure animals, reserved for the Untouchables of the region. The hierarchical order established among the various types of foods reflects the caste hierarchy, and in turn enables us to better understand that the *bāhan* are apparently Maṣṭā's servants, who go as far as carrying him around. Here, however, they are relegated to the bottom of the hierarchy among the impure. In Thārpā, the word *ḍum* (which, in this area, refers to all Untouchables) was spontaneously used by the informants to designate the *bāhan*, who, in fact, eat the same foods as the Untouchables and, like the Untouchables, live on the outskirts of the villages.[47]

The most noteworthy feature of the cult of Maṣṭā is, as we have said, the combination of a well-known shrine and an oracle, that people come from great distances to consult. The *dhāmi* or *jhākri* of Central and Eastern Nepal functions on his own independent of any organized religious establishment. People come for individual consultations and the size of his clientele depends on his personal reputation. In the West, however, it is the fame of the shrine, the hereditary property of a lineage, much more than the individual personality of the *dhāmi*, that attracts the clients.

But what do they ask the oracle residing in the shrine? Naturally they ask all the usual small favours: the recovery of a lost or stolen object, news of someone who has gone away, reassuring predictions about an uncertain future. The god is supposedly capable of granting all types of favours and his power is illustrated in a legend from Thārpā (legend D) by the following story. In the past, two queens, co-wives of the king of Kumaon, had no children, and came to Thārpā to ask for a son. Unfortunately the *dhāmi* died just before their arrival and their long pilgrimage seemed useless. But the god took pity on them and for a moment resuscitated the *dhāmi* in order to speak through him and promise the much desired son.

The ailing come to consult or have consultations made for them. Their illness is diagnosed by the spellbound *dhāmi* who generally attributes it to the influence of an evil spirit, a 'ghost' for example - as was the case for the wife of Tibrikot mentioned above - or a sorceress.[48] But the evil may also come from divinities of the shrine who, just like our saints, are never entirely good or evil but help or harm in accordance with the way they are treated by the worshippers. This point is particularly well developed in legend D: if the people fail to make the proper offerings to Maṣṭā, if they wrong his worshippers or his priests, then misfortune will fall upon them; sickness, death of their livestock, bad harvests. Generally the god does not inflict the punishment himself but appoints his *bāhan* to attack people *(lāgnu)*. Each *bāhan* is specialized in a different illness: in Thārpā, Gaṅgaḍo paralyses, hence his name;[49] Gum Deva gives stiff necks.

We have already seen how in Bābiro, Lāṭī (the deaf mute) makes idiots of her victims. She often has a male counterpart, Lāṭā. The list could be continued since the name of the *bāhan* changes from one shrine to another.[50] The victim of these misfortunes must then consult Maṣṭā who, through his *dhāmi*, says 'It is because you committed a certain offence that I had you attacked by a certain *bāhan*.' He then prescribes offerings of atonement: utensils for the cult, wooden statues such as we have seen in Bābiro ... and naturally the sacrifice of roosters for the *bāhan* and young goats for the main divinities. Once the reparations have been made, the misfortunes disappear ... It is therefore generally the *bāhan* who attack and the principal god who examines the case. Although I never witnessed it, I was told that the opposite may occur: a *dhāmi* can have his *bāhan* examine the patient, since, as they say in Thārpā, 'You can't examine your own eye'. This aphorism clearly illustrates the conception of illness as possession by a spirit who comes to live in a patient's body.

But the most characteristic activity of these shrines is the administering of justice. A man who feels he has been wronged can either have direct recourse to the god or even appeal to him subsequent to a court decision he considers unjust. A Thakuri informant of Gum gives a good description of the procedure followed in Thārpā. 'If an individual, claiming that someone else's land belongs to him, obtained a court decision (in his favour), if therefore the liar won and the man within his rights lost, then the latter goes (to the shrine) and says: 'I didn't have the power, I didn't have the money. I didn't find anyone (to help me); he won, I was unable to win; O God, grant me justice yourself.' He lies in the temple on a bed of nettles with a pillow of thorns. Then the god attacks the man who won (unjustly). He causes misfortune to fall upon his house; kills his livestock, takes the life of his relatives - men, women, children - and makes him ill. The *dhāmi* , upon examining him, says: 'It is Thārpā Maṣṭā who attacks you.' The latter is convinced of it, goes (to Thārpā) where the god tells him (through the mouth of the *dhāmi*) 'You took his land without having any right to it, you seduced and corrupted all kinds of *diṭṭhā* and *bicāri*[51] and you won your trial (...). Although you got a decision (in your favour), if you want to tear up this decision, tear it up, give up his land! Otherwise I won't leave you alone.' Then the man who won his trial says: 'I give up the land.' And the decision, rendered by the government is torn up, there in the temple' (legend D). In the eyes of the worshippers, Maṣṭā is actually capable of harming wrongdoers in order to compel them to rectify their evil deeds. Actually, the power of a god seems to reside more in the fear he inspires than in the misfortunes he can cause. As an example, more than 15 years ago, Gokul Gaine, a native of Balesa who settled in Dailekh, was touring the region of Jumla. There, he falls in love at first sight with a young Damini. He invites her husband to the inn at the bazaar, makes him drunk and convinces the young woman to flee

with him to Dailekh. Her father-in-law tries in vain to obtain the customary compensation for his son but his demands before the leading citizens of Dailekh bring no results. He then goes to lie in a bed of nettles in the temple of Bābiro. Gokul Gāine learns of this. Then - and here we see how the appeal to a god really works - even before anything happens, but fearing some misfortune to his new wife, he goes, of his own accord, to the shrine and obtains an amicable arrangement. Real power or fear? Whatever it may be, an appeal is never made in vain.

Maṣṭā is moreover not the only god to administer justice in the religion. There are others, including Kailas whose main shrine is in Taligoṭhi, near Kolti, in the Kunda Khola valley. In his temple, they have hung chains which allegedly belong to prisoners who were unjustly incarcerated and then freed by the god. This type of justiciary god evidently does not exist in Central Nepal: a counter-inquiry I made there in February-March 1968 failed to turn up any new information. On the other hand, this type of god extends beyond Western Nepal into the Indian districts of the Kumaon and Gadhwal. In 1884, Atkinson described their recourse to the god Goril: 'If someone is wronged by a neighbour, he (...) brings rice to the temple of Goril or to another popular spirit, places it before the stone representing the divinity and prays the divinity to harass his enemy. This is an effective way of obtaining justice without the intervention of the courts since, if the person whom the god has been asked to harass becomes sick, he must appease not only the divinity but also the man who invoked the god's power. This generally turns out to be a costly affair.'[52]

Having analyzed the ceremonies and the function of the oracle, we must now elaborate on the nature of the possession. The trance first begins with trembling, but it is rarely said that the *dhāmi* trembles *(kāpnu)* as in Central Nepal. They prefer the verb *bahulāunu*, literally to become crazy, thereby indicating that this is not the *dhāmi*'s usual personality. The trembling is moreover not very pronounced and quickly disappears as the trance continues. It therefore never has the violence and duration we see farther east. The change in the *dhāmi*'s personality is manifested primarily by a change in voice. However, his delivery is not abrupt, in time with the shaking, nor interspersed with meaningless syllables as it is in Central Nepal. Rather, it is continuous and in a register much higher than the ordinary voice. Some have a tendency to shout (as in Thārpā) but most often they remain calm and utter their remonstrances and exhortations in a falsetto voice. It is therefore mainly by the *dhāmi*'s delivery that the god manifests his presence, but he also appears in the body of his oracle who has become nothing more than the instrument of the god. During the entire ceremony, the *dhāmi* acts as if he were the god; he sits on the *gādī* like a statue on its pedestal; he is worshipped like the divinity himself. This is especially evident in Thārpā at the time of the full moon festivals when, as we have

seen, it is the *dhāmi* and not the Brahman who performs the fire sacrifice. Now, this *dhāmī* is illiterate, he is of the Matvali Chetri caste and has no right to the sacred thread: knowledge of the Veda and the celebration of the sacrifice are theoretically forbidden to him. When he recites and officiates, he is therefore no longer the same man he was in daily life, but a being who, because of the trance, has become a god. The Brahman are indeed present but they remain outside the temple, near the door. They also recite the Veda at the same time as the *dhāmi* but they use a book. If they make a reading error, the *dhāmi* supposedly interrupts himself in order to reprimand them. Then the Brahman join hands and say: 'We made a mistake, God, forgive us.' There is no one above the Brahman in the caste hierarchy: if they excuse themselves so prosaically, it is not before a man, but before the god himself.

At the time of the full-moon ceremonies, the *dhāmi* actually mimes the god. The most common term used to designate the trance is *paturnu*. This word is not in the dictionaries, but the people I questioned always defined it as 'to be in a trance'. *Paturnu* may be compared with the Hindi *paturiyā* or *pāttar*, which in Nepāli is *pātar*, *pātarnī* or *pātinī* and refers to a dancer, generally an Untouchable.[53] The verb would therefore mean 'to dance', and refer to the most impressive manifestation of the god in the possessed dance of the full-moon feasts. This dance does not exist farther east and, any analogies would be found rather in the Indian districts beyond the western border of Nepal. Thus Berreman (1963) describes, for Gadhwal, a possessed dance of the Pāṇḍava and other gods of the village.[54]

The god, embodied in the *dhāmi*, therefore manifests himself by the rice, gestures and dances. The *dhāmi* never seeks the god. Other populations of Nepal were 'shamans' who leave in search of gods or stray souls[55] and even the *jhākri* of Central Nepal have the *guru pūjā* (viz: Macdonald 1962:125-126) ceremony where they are supposed to travel through the skies and the underworld. Nothing of this sort appeared here. The *dhāmi* is first possessed, he has no initiation, there is no ceremony during which his soul is supposed to travel. It is always the god who takes possession of him and instead of the mystical ascension, there is always incarnation, *avatār*. This term, peculiar to Eastern Nepal, seems to embrace separate and distinct institutions. Once again, we will have to look for corresponding institutions in the districts bordering on India.

The difficult problem of identifying the god still remains. Snellgrove (1961:19, 29) maintains that it is a question of a 'Mountain-God'. He explains in another work what he means by this expression: there are the masters of the ground, worshipped in the mountain passes, where a pile of stones are erected in their honour (Snellgrove 1957:176). Maṣṭā as we have seen, is a pro-

tecting god but he is not a true master of the ground. He is in any case different from the divinity worshipped in the mountain passes. Throughout Nepal, the latter is a goddess called Deurālī. Atkinson (1884) describes her for the North-Western Provinces of India and gives the text of a prayer where she is invoked as a goddess *(devī)*. This clearly shows that it is a feminine divinity, whereas Maṣṭā is always presented as masculine and nothing in his legends or in his cult associates him with the mountain passes.

Snellgrove (1961:28) adds: 'There is no doubt that Maṣṭā and Bābiro represent native beliefs, whereas Tripura Sundari and Bhairav Nāth are, in a sense, foreigners.' Why make this separation between the 'Nine Durgā Bhavānī, who include Tripura Sundari and who have a counterpart in classical Hinduism, and Maṣṭā when they are always associated in the cult and have been for centuries? We must not be too quick in calling certain divinities indigenous or pre-Hindu simply because the relationship with the classical tradition is not immediately apparent. Before concluding, we must make a thorough investigation which is difficult in light of the absence of written works. There are, however, certain details that might lead us to identify Maṣṭā with Shiva. Without taking into consideration the association with Bhavānī, we have seen that the Vāma Deva *gotra* has been attributed to him: this is not a classical *gotra* but one of the names of Shiva. There are Twelve Maṣṭā just as there are Twelve Mahālinga. The theme of Maṣṭā eviscerating the *rākṣas* has a counter-part in the iconography of Shiva. These facts could lead us to identify him with Shiva, which might be possible, at least insofar as they are both vegetarians for Shiva accepts no bloody sacrifices. But his hypothesis raises difficulties since Maṣṭā would then have to be the master of the Bhavānī whereas he is rather represented as their servant and protector. We must therefore look instead towards the awesome divinities such as Bhairav or perhaps the deified ascetics ... Identifying Maṣṭā will be difficult since the people have for centuries developed local legends and created among the various gods certain fictitious relationships. But the possibility of a classical origin must not be rejected *a priori*. This region of old Hindu culture, and formerly even Buddhist culture, holds many surprises for us.[56]

The study of the god, Maṣṭā, will be augmented by other publications placing the work in a broader Himalayan context: the observation of more highly elaborated ceremonies in Kumaon, allowing a more complete analysis of the important role of musicians who control the trance, as well as of the *guru* of the oracles, with disclosure of ties between the latter and the sect of Nāth (Gaborieau 1974:49-68; 1975a). On the other hand, consideration of data collected in Central Nepal shows that the local oracles *(dāgre* or *dhāmi)* imitate in simplified form the more complex ceremonies of Western Nepal and Kumaon (Gaborieau 1975b). I have reached the conclusion that it is a question of Hindu populations carrying the same cult from west to east.

Marc Gaborieau

1. Bābiro is one of the forms of Maṣṭā.

2. Orally communicated in 1966: K. B. Bista is presently preparing a paper on the *kuldevatā*. A. W. Macdonald had heard of Maṣṭā among the *jhākri* of Kalimpong. H. B. Gurung called my attention to the importance of the shrine of Thārpā that he had himself visited in 1966.

3. Visit financed by the C. N. R. S. in the framework of the RCP Nepal; primary objective was to complete my documentation on the Moslems and begin work on the castes. I was accompanied on the first trip by Prayag Raj Sharma and on the second by Drona Prasad Rajaurya. I wish to thank both of them for helping me gather the material presented here and for helping with the tape recordings.

4. These gods are mentioned by Narhari Nath (1956 II, 1:33; II,3:463-466). I recorded a legend concerning Jaganāth.

5. See the article of Devi Chandra (1968) which furnishes details on the legend and the cult. Devi Chandra Shresta, who was stationed in Jumla, helped me begin the inquiry on Maṣṭā.

6. I plan to come back to this subject at a later date, namely when I publish the text and translation of the legends and complete the list of the divinities.

7. These various forms are moreover recorded by Narhari Nath (1956 II, 1:23) 'Maṣṭā'; (Ibid.:367) 'Maṣṭo'; (1956 II. 3: 493) 'Maiṭho'.

8. Programme broadcast in Gadhwali by the radio station in Lucknow, February 13, 1968.

9. Information gathered in Dang, April 1968.

10. The Tibetan populations extend far into the north and east. There are of course some Gurung and Magar on the northern and southern fringes of the Middle-land (the districts of Dailekh, Accham and Doti) but they only arrived during the last century. Moreover they are quite few in number and almost entirely concentrated in the district of Dailekh. The only tribal population in this area consists of the itinerant group of Raute.

11. On the *dasnām* see Ghurye (1964:Chap.5). As far as I know of the 'ten names' *(dasnām)* listed by Ghurye (Ibid.:82), only Bhāratī, Giri, Puri and Vana are found in Nepal.

12. On this sect, see Ghurye (1964:Chap.8) and Briggs (1938). The Yogi Narhari Nath, native of the district of Jumla and belonging to this sect, published an important sociological and historical document on the Kanphata of Nepal. I hope to discuss it elsewhere.

13. Same remark in the Gazetteer of Kangra: 'All Bairagi and Gusain have quite dropped the character of Sadhus: the name has become in fact a caste name.' The Bairagi is a Vaishnava ascetic: I met none in Nepal. Gusain (for *gosāĩ*) is a title used by Samnyasi.

14. Proper usage west of Nepal (and in the district adjacent to India). See Briggs (1960:109-112, 204-5). In central Nepal, the word *ḍum* applies only to the caste of Damai and, among the Newar, to the caste of Kulu, tanners and drum builders.

15. Concerning the caste hierarchy in Nepal, see Gaborieau (1966:85-87).

16. Note that Gosaĩ (cf. footnote 13) Giri does not designate a 'Chetri subcaste', but the Samnyasi.

17. This dynasty, that ruled Western Nepal and Tibet and areas adjacent to India, lasted until the middle of the XIVth century. Concerning its history, see Tucci (1956) and Narhari Nath (1956; 1965).

18. This text was published by Narhari Nath (1956 II:13). In Bināyak, I personally saw a later document dated V. S. 1942 (1885 A. D.) that expressly mentioned this document of V. S. 1863 (1806 A. D.).

19. Legends A to E are recorded and the texts have been written down. F was written for my sake by a Brahman. Legend G, partially rhymed, was taken down from dictation in Nepāli by Prayag Raj Sharma.

20. She gave her name to Tibrikot. Concerning the shrine of Tripura Sundari in this village, see Snellgrove (1961:27) and Tucci (1956:37).

21. On the temple of Kanak Sundari in Sinja, see Narhari Nath (1965 II:83).

22. The most celebrated shrine of Mālikā is west of the Karnali, at the boundary of the districts of Jumla and Bajura, at the top of a mountain more than 13,000 feet high. The full-moon festival of Sāun attracts thousands of worshippers from all of Western Nepal. Here for example, the list of Nine

Bhavānī in Ukhāḍi: Mahākālī, Sarda, Mālika, Jālpā, Tripura Sundari, Deurālī, Vindhyabasinī, Mahisamardini, Siddhidāta.

23. I saw a temple dedicated to Ksetrapāl Maṣṭā near Ukhaḍi.

24. These expressions are not given in dictionaries. On the vocabulary dealing with possession in Central Nepal, see Macdonald (1962:125).

25. The word *mãḍu*, derived from the Sanskrit *maṇḍapa*, means temple. It is not in dictionaries and is not used in Central Nepal ... except as part of the name of the capital Kāṭhmãdaũ (wooden temple). The word is recorded by Narhari Nath (1956 II:93). Bhatta (1961:14) mentions it in the district of Baitadi with the spelling *māṇũ*. *Deuḍo* may be compared with the word *deoro* which, in Rajasthan, means a temple having a possessed oracle *(bhopa)*. See Chauhan (1967:202-206).

26. *Gādī* is the pronunciation in the West; in Central Nepal they say *gaddi*. This word literally means comfortable cushions and by extension, the seat of the guest of honour, of an official, or a king. 'Throne' is not a literal translation, but I think it expresses the implications of the word.

27. This fact should perhaps be considered in light of the following remark from the Gazetteer of Kangra: 'A man who has a special request to make of the devta makes an offering of a small trident, which is stuck into the wood work in front of the temple (...). Sometimes a post with a grotesque face carved on it is kept for this purpose.'

28. Illiteracy is a condition *sine qua non* for being a *dhāmi* in Thārpā (it is the same for *dhāmi* from Kailas to Kunda Khola). The recitation of the Veda then appears as a miracle. We must add, however, that in Thārpā there is always a lapse of 12 years between a *dhāmi*'s death and the establishment of his successor. The latter therefore has by far enough time to learn the Veda, but officially, there is no training. The *dhāmi* of Mahabhaya also recite the Veda.

29. Hutton, cited by Briggs (1960:442). Insofar as Hutton's spelling is very approximate, we cannot be certain that this is the same word. But the similarities in the institutions and languages on both sides of the boundary lead us to believe that it is the same. The Persian etymology proposed by Hutton - phonetically quite difficult to accept - would therefore appear rather far-fetched.

30. Concerning the history of the possession of this queen who is at the source of the Kumari cult, see Macdonald (1966b:

289-290). This association between hair and possession is also attested to in India. In Punjab, in the state of Maler Kotla, possession by the holy Moslem Shaikh Sadr-ud-Din is described as follows: 'At first the woman sits silent with her head lowered and then begins to roll her head with hair dishevelled (...). In a few moments the Shaikh expresses through her what he wants ...' (Rose 1919:644). 'Their womenfolk were very afraid of going into the water closet with their hair let down, and they always tied its ends in a knot before going in, because they believed the water closets to be the favourite haunts of evil spirits who would possess them unless their hair was up.' For the United Provinces W. Crooke (1886:109) writes: 'In the hills it is believed that he the god Bhumiya possesses people, and the sign of this is that the hair of the scalp lock entangled.' Not only is hanging hair associated with possession, but (particularly in N. Chaudhuri's quote) it seems that the divinity enters the possessed's body through his hair: this interpretation is given by Crooke (1886:109-239). 'The hair is universally regarded as an entry for spirits.' Could it not be the same for the possession studied here?

31. Or *jhãkri* (since in Nepāli the final *'i'* and *'e'* are often interchangeable). Both forms are given in Sarma (1962:402).

32. The passage from *ya* to *e* is automatic in Nepāli. Turner (1931:231) expected the consonant 'g' according to the etymology (under *jhãkro*). 'K' would be a deformation characteristic of Central Nepal.

33. Atkinson (1884) in the paragraph on the god Goril.

34. Sarma (1962:40) gives the word under *dāṅgre* with the meaning 'he who studies the art of the *dhāmi - jhãkri*; student of the *dhāmi* or *jhãkri*.' It seems to me that this definition does not correspond to the current usage. The suggested etymology (*ḍhyāṅgro*, drum of the *jhãkri*) seems doubtful to me since the word applies to people who generally do not use a drum. Moreover, the word appears to come from the West where this drum is unknown.

35. The word is common in Jumla to designate, for instance, those who serve as interpreters between the Nepalis and Tibetans or between the Nepalis and English-speaking foreigners. The word may derive from the Sanskrit *khyāpana*, explanation.

36. Concerning this caste and the musical instruments used, see the article of Mireille Helffer (1969:51-58).

37. This foundation is called *guṭhi*. Cf. M C. Regmi (1968).

38. See, for example, the text of V. S. 1863 (1806 A. D.) mentioned above, footnote 18.

39. Here is the text: 'Some of the large shrines have fixed establishments, a kardār or manager, an account, one or more pujāris or priests, several musicians, several gur or chela, i.e. interpreters of the oracle, standard bearers, blacksmith, carpenter, florist, watchman, messenger, carriers of loads, etc. ... to all of whom barto, or land rent-free in lieu of pay is assigned out of temple endowments. Most have a kārdār, a gur and musicians.'

40. Devi Candra (1968); here, it is the *pujārī* who gives the 'seal' whereas in Thārpā it is the *dhāmi*.

41. Sarma (1962:2019) gives *dhamelo* and the variation *dhamelī* with the meaning of concentration on work. He also gives *dhamela* 'a *dhāmī*'s work or profession.' Neither of these definitions corresponds to the usual meaning in the West, 'ceremony where the *dhāmī* falls in a trance', with consultation implied.

42. Concerning this goddess, see above.

43. This word, not found in dictionaries, corresponds to *vāyū* in Central Nepal. *Maiyā̃* refers to the ghost who manifests himself by harming men. When he has been appeased by the construction of a small temple and regular offerings, he is called *pitar* (term also used in western Nepal).

44. For example, in Thārpā, festivals take place in the months of Baisākh (April-May), Jeth (May-June), Sāun (July-August) and Māgh (January-February). In Bābiro: Baisākh, Sāun, Kārtik (October-November), and Māgh.

45. The *gotra* is a type of clan name. Concerning the usage of this word, see I. Karve (1965:51). Vama Deva is not included in the list of classical *gotra*. This is the name of an ascetic and also one of the names given to Śiva.

46. Sarma (1962:869). This is a thread that the Brahman ties around the wrist of the person organizing the sacrifice *(jajmān)* and around the wrist of members of his family.

47. The subordinate gods, servants of the main ones, are found also in Kumaon and Gadhwal: Atkinson mentions Sau and Bhau who carry the palanquin of the god Airi.

48. In the West, sorceresses are called *boksi*, *boksīnī* or *kapatnī*. Concerning the sorceress in Nepal, see Macdonald (in this volume).

49. Sarma (1962:237), *gaṅgaryāunu*; and Turner (1931:133) *gaṅryāunu*; 'to become numb'.

50. I plan to come back to this question at a later date and give lists of *bāhaṅ*. Since their names are not in the dictionaries, it will take quite a bit of work to find the exact meaning and etymology of their names.

51. Civil servants of the Nepali courts.

52. Atkinson (1884) on the god Goril.

53. *Pātar* and *patārnī* are given by Turner (1931:374); *pātinī* was recorded in Jumla. Turner translates it as 'harlot, prostitute', but this is a secondary meaning associated with the (sometimes warranted) bad reputation of the dancers. But I saw that in the West, the word had the honourable meaning of dancer, and the *bādī* themselves use it to designate their wives.

54. Berreman (1963:383) on the dance of the Pāṇḍava; for the other divinities (Berreman 1963:91-93). The ceremony called Kālrātrā is basically like the full-moon festivals in Western Nepal: possessed dances, consultation of an oracle, sacrifices.

55. A bibliography on 'shamanism' in Nepal is found in Macdonald (1968b:62-63). Sagant (1969) studies analogous facts among the Limbu in Eastern Nepal.

56. I was unable to discover the derivation of the name Maṣṭā. Narhari Nath (1956:119, vol.I) equates him with Chinna Maṣṭā. But she is a goddess whereas Maṣṭā is always presented as a god. If the word is of Sanskrit origin, it may be derived from either *mastaka*, head (which is also a name of Śiva: cf. *Sanskrit Dictionary* of Monnier-Williams (1899) or from late Sanskrit: Maṣṭā, or *Māstaka* or *Masta*(ka) given by Edgerton (1953:432) with the definition: 'seems to mean something like construction, product, contrivance, ingenious device; usually in comp. with prec. *yantra* ... seems to refer especially to toys ...'

XIII

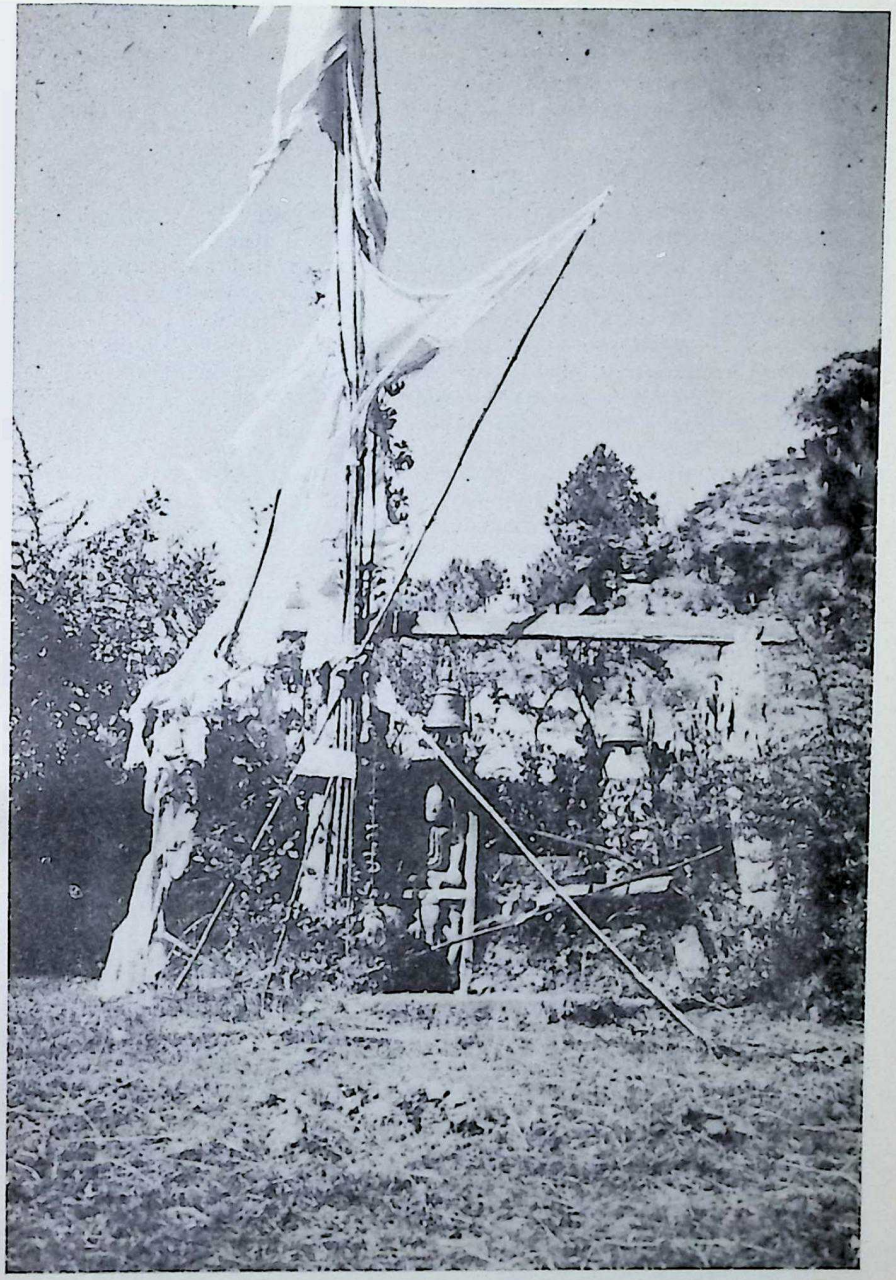
SPIRIT POSSESSION IN FAR WESTERN NEPAL

Based on interviews with six *dhāmi* of far western Nepal, this paper will describe the recruitment to the position of the *dhāmi*, his role performance in village rituals, the relationship of the *dhāmi*'s role to other societal roles, and the *dhāmi*'s control over resources and values within the society. Finally, I will discuss some of the questions that arise in comparing this analysis to information on spirit possession in other parts of the Himalayan area. The six interviews were selected from a number of *dhāmi* that I interviewed because of the completeness and frankness of the statements and because I was able to observe several of them while they were in a state of possession. The interviews were conducted in Nepali with the assistance of a village headman from the district. Of the six informants interviewed, two were Brahmans, two were Chetris, and two were of low caste affiliation.

The Six Informants

The Lāmani *dhāmi* is a man in his middle 60s from a Jaisi Brahman lineage. Jaisi caste status is acquired when an Upādhyāya father marries an Upādhyāya widow. In the case of the Lāmani *dhāmi* such a marriage was made by his lineage ancestor many generations ago and is no longer specifically recalled. The goddess Lāmani who possesses, or in the local language 'shakes' on him, is an important assistant to his lineage's principal deity and her temple is located adjacent to the temple of the lineage deity *(kul deutā)*. The Lāmani goddess is revered as a lineage ancestor's wife who was martyred by Thakuris (a high caste of warrior status) and subsequently began to possess and protect lineage members. Lāmani is also found among other Brahman and Chetri castes where she has a similar history.

The Kedār-Nāth *dhāmi* is a man in his middle 40s who belongs to the shoemaker caste, a group ranked as untouchable. He is regarded as a leader both in his own village and among the low caste community because of his position as a clerk in a government office and his reputation for honesty. Kedār-Nāth is a major god *(ţhulo deutā)* in the district and is worshipped by and possesses a wide range of castes. This particular caste of shoemakers is



Shrine for worship of *ān bān* (assistant deities)

believed to be one of the original castes of the area and to have first received and aided the god when it came to them in the form of a snake. They are recognized as having a special relationship with the deity, and he possesses one of them. Kedār-Nāth is also worshipped in a separate form as the lineage deity of the Lāmani *dhāmi*.

The *picāsini dhāmini* (female for *dhāmi*) is a young Jaisi Brahman woman in her early 30s. She is possessed by a female ancestral spirit of her husband's family. This female ancestral spirit *(picāsini)* was an only daughter who had been married into this family. It is narrated that after her marriage no one at her new home treated her with affection. Saddened by such treatment the young girl died and began to possess members of the family and their descendants. The girl whose spirit now possesses the *dhāmini* was her great grandmother-in-law. The *dhāmini*'s family of birth was poor, and she was orphaned at an early age. Marriage to her husband, a man in his 60s, involved the deception that she was going to be married to a younger man. Her condition at present is not a happy one. To obtain enough grain she must frequently contract to work in other families' fields. Her son has been sent to live with relatives in India where he can receive an education.

The Asinā *dhāmi* is a Jaisi Brahman of about 65 years of age. He has particular local fame because Asinā Kedār, the god who 'shakes' on him, is believed to have influence over the clouds and rain. Asinā Kedār is a mountaintop god whose temple is located on a prominent ridge in the district. Villagers whose crops suffer from a lack of rain or who wish to secure rain at crucial times in the agricultural season will form a procession *(jāt)* to his temple. After worship of the god, the *dhāmi* will shake and give the villagers a cloth into which some grains of rice are tied. The villagers are then instructed to take this cloth to a nearby high windy pass and open it. The clouds are then expected to gather and produce rain. When interviewed the *dhāmi* had just returned from a neighbouring village. The previous night the villagers had asked him to shake, but he had been reluctant. 'The people told me the maize was drying up, but at first I did not intend to shake. The *hawaldār* (a Nepalese army sergeant) came and said that I must shake because someone was ill in the village and because of the lack of rain. I decided finally that it was my duty as *dhāmi* to shake and so I did.' It had rained during the night and I interviewed the *dhāmi* in the morning after the rain had stopped.

The Lāṭo *dhāmi* is in his late 60s and a member of the low-ranked carpenter caste. He is priest *(paṇḍā)* as well as *dhāmi* of his family god which is, as in the case with many low caste gods, worshipped in the home. The *dhāmi* is also well known for his skill as a carpenter. For a brief time at the end of my interview with him, the Lāṭo *dhāmi* became possessed and the god Lāṭo

stated that a good fortune would come to me before the year ended.

The *dhāmi* of Laṅgar Sahi is in his middle 40s and a member of a Matwāli Chetri caste, a classification of castes regarded as of ritually pure status but which does not wear the Hindu sacred thread. The god which possesses him, Laṅgar Sahi, is also worshipped by Bhotias, Hindu Nepalis long resident in Nepal but of Tibetan ethnic origins. While on a trip to one of the more distant areas of the district, a night was spent with the *dhāmi* and his Bhotia clients. This made possible a detailed observation of the preparations and possession of the *dhāmi*.

Recruitment to the Position of Dhāmi

As previously noted spirit possession within the district is referred to as the god 'shaking' *(kāmnu)* on a person. This shaking can come upon any individual regardless of caste or sex. The god or spirit is believed to come from an external source and descend upon the head or shoulders of his or her devotee. It is said that he 'mounts' *(caṛnu)* the devotee's shoulders. For the one possessed, in the case of a *dhāmi*, this relationship is a benevolent one occurring because of the state of grace or harmony existing between him or her and the god. Thus the god is said to have 'come' *(āyo)* to the *dhāmi* contrasted to saying that he has struck *(lāgyo)* an individual, as would be said in the case of malevolent possession. A wide range of deities and spirits may choose to possess an individual though usually only one will do so regularly. Many of these deities and spirits possess a person in an idiosyncratic manner, and each will confer on the *dhāmi* for the period of possession its particular powers. The principal indicator that possession has occurred in the *dhāmi* is his hyper-normal state characterized by trembling and what may be referred to as forms of hysterical behaviour. This state will be discussed in more detail under the heading of the *dhāmi*'s performance.

With this brief introduction, recruitment to the position of *dhāmi* will be further examined in terms of the following: 1) the pre-possession status of the *dhāmi*, 2) the specific event that precipitated his possession, and, 3) the community validation of his role. In four cases, the pre-possession condition of the *dhāmi* can be described as one of personal or family unhappiness. The Lāmani *dhāmi* recounted the following: previous to his first 'shaking' and because of the poverty of his family following his father's death, he had spent nine years grazing cattle at the home of an Upādhyāya Brahman. In the case of the *dhāmi* of Kedār-Nāth, his family had been troubled because Kedār-Nāth had 'shaken' on the *dhāmi*'s grandfather and uncle and then rejected them because they had not maintained the necessary rules of purity. For the following eighteen years the god had not possessed anyone in the village despite attempts to recall him. Prior to his first possession the

Lāṭo *dhāmi* had fought several court cases with higher ranked castes which had resulted in the loss of his land. The *picāsini dhāmini*, after her marriage, was taunted at her new home about her parental family's poverty and was troubled herself by her failure to bear a son for her husband. In contrast neither the Asinā *dhāmi* nor the *dhāmi* of Laṅgar Sahi, recalled any particular disadvantage or stress before their first shaking.

Among these six *dhāmi* the existence of a close family relative who had also been possessed by the god is a strong factor to be noted. With the exception of the *picāsini dhāmini* either a grandfather, father, uncle, or brother had previously been possessed by the god. Among three of the four other *dhāmi* quoted in this study, a similar condition also prevailed. However, when questioned as to whether a father's possession indicated that a son would inherit the god, a majority of the *dhāmi* answered, 'This is not a knowable thing'.

Regardless of the history of 'shaking' within a family, for each of the *dhāmi* the initial incident of possession took place at the time of an immediate personal or village crisis. The Lāmani *dhāmi* narrated that his first 'shaking' occurred at the age of fifteen at the village temple. At that time the store-keeper of the temple *(bhandāriya)* accused him of being malevolently possessed and attempted to drive out the spirit with a piece of burning wood. The goddess Lāmani immediately came to possess him and protect him from harm. For the *dhāmi* of Kedār-Nāth his first possession took place at the age of twenty-two at the temple of Kedār-Nāth during a period of continuous worship attempting to recall the god to again possess someone in the village. On the seventh day of this worship while singing with a group of young boys he became possessed without becoming aware of it though other *dhāmi* and villagers present circled him and began to bow to him. The Lāṭo *dhāmi* first became possessed at the age of thirty-two when his wife, daughter, and milk cow all became ill. After despairing in tears for two hours, he began to shake and later both his wife, daughter, and cow became well. The *picāsini dhāmini* first became possessed during a serious illness of her husband. One day having taken her husband outside the house he fainted, and she became possessed and blew *(phuknu)* upon his face, a curing technique used by *dhāmi*. From that day his condition improved. The *dhāmi* of Laṅgar Sahi and the Asinā *dhāmi* indicated that they first 'shook' during times of trouble for their villages. The *dhāmi* of Laṅgar Sahi first 'shook' at the age of twenty because of an epidemic in his village and the Asinā *dhāmi* first 'shook' at the age of fourteen for the same reason.

The process by which a novice *dhāmi*'s initial possession is validated by the community contains some or all of the following elements: exhibition during possession of behaviour and speech characteristic of the god, accurate prediction of events, passage

of a test, and completion of a quest to meet with the god. Once full acceptance of the *dhāmi*'s position has been achieved, it is often symbolized by the individual's wearing a silver bracelet or bracelets on the wrist or a small pair of gold earrings. A partial validation of the Lāmani *dhāmi*'s new status took place when the temple storekeeper attempted but was unable to injure him with a piece of burning wood. This was taken by the villagers as an indication that the god Lāmani was truly possessing the boy. An example of the process of validation took place in the Lāmani *dhāmi*'s village during the period of field research. In this village the *dhāmi* of the lineage deity Kedār-Nāth had died eight months before and his son was still observing the required mourning *(kriyā)* for his father. A lineage member had begun to 'shake' and the Lāmani *dhāmi* stated that it was Kedār-Nāth who was 'shaking' on this man. The villagers adopted a cautious attitude. It was not assumed that the god would necessarily come to shake on the son of the *dhāmi*. It was believed that whomever the deity should possess would be evident to all because this deity has a characteristic style of speaking. The *dhāmi* will also be watched particularly by the senior men of the lineage as to the accuracy of his predictions. The timing of this possession was significant because the occasion for the presentation of the new harvest to the lineage god was approaching, a time when the *dhāmi* should 'shake' at the temple. The low caste *dhāmi* of Kedār-Nāth recounted that soon after his first possession his 'shaking' was validated by his removing a malevolent spirit from a woman and making the accurate prediction that she would give birth to a son within the coming year. The *dhāmi* of Lāṭo was able to confirm his status by his successful performance before several other *dhāmi*. In this instance he was able to determine that a woman was being malevolently possessed by the god of her birth place *(māiti deutā)* because her husband's family had insulted her family of birth. The *dhāmi* then arranged for compensation to be made to this god so that it would leave the girl. In the course of this possession the Lāṭo *dhāmi* placed some clarified butter on his tongue and hands and licked and stroked a hot iron bar to demonstrate the protection of the god. In some cases such physical tests may be explicitly set for the validation of a *dhāmi*. A Lohār blacksmith informant indicated that a claimant to the role of *dhāmi* in his village must, while possessed, pick up and handle a red hot iron bar without injury before his possession and status as *dhāmi* will be accepted. For the *picāsini dhāmini* the cure of her husband and later the birth of a son was taken by her family as proof that the ancestral spirit was indeed 'shaking' on her. The *dhāmi* of Laṅgar Sahi and the Asinā *dhāmi* described their status validation as *dhāmi* without special procedures other than close scrutiny as to the accuracy of their predictions. In their cases the village's emphasis on the hereditary continuity of the possession was strong. The Asinā *dhāmi* indicated that he had recently assisted in this type of transition in his village by certifying that it was the lineage deity who was 'shaking' on a young boy, the nephew of the recently deceased *dhāmi* of the god.

An additional element in the *dhāmi*'s validation process should be noted. It is possible for an individual when first possessed to go to a remote place to confirm his relationship with the deity. The Lāmani *dhāmi* described such a journey to a nearby mountain top where he stayed for one night. He received a vision in which the god explained to him the *mantra* of various places.

Although each god has certain idiosyncracies, the general model of spirit possession is well known to all, even children. It is also well known that possession may be faked or simulated. As a consequence the first instances of the *dhāmi*'s claim of possession are observed and tested very carefully. There are supernatural as well as social sanctions for the false or insincere *dhāmi*. It is the general opinion that death or misfortune within a year will be the lot of a man who falsely declares himself a *dhāmi*. More effective than this supernatural sanction is the social scorn and disapproval placed on an individual believed to be faking possession. Such a person may be treated as mentally incompetent. For this reason, a family will often attempt to conceal instances of possession of any of its members. During the period of the fieldwork a young high school student began to behave as if possessed, leaping from a classroom window and haranguing his teachers in the name of a deity. The boy's fellow students frequently taunted him and his parents became alarmed that if these incidents became widely known it would be impossible to arrange his marriage. The boy, who appeared to be disturbed and not engaging in a prank, was withdrawn from school and kept at home. Once an individual's position as *dhāmi* has been validated, it is unlikely that his states of possession will again be subjected to critical review. Even if his possession at times is blatantly contrived, it is not likely that it will be challenged.

Role Performance of the Dhāmi

The *dhāmi*'s role performance can be analyzed in several ways. These are as follows: the necessary preconditions; the paraphernalia and techniques; the consciousness of the *dhāmi* while possessed; and the *dhāmi*'s concept of power.

The *dhāmi*'s standards of personal and ritual purity are key factors in his maintenance of a proper relationship between himself and the god or spirit. This relationship has aspects of a contract between the *dhāmi* and the god, and insures that if the *dhāmi* observes the rules of this agreement the god will continue to visit him regularly. If there is a lack of observance, the god may punish or desert the *dhāmi*. The Kedār-Nāth *dhāmi*, as an example, will not accept food even from a Brahman unless that Brahman assures him that there is no ritual impurity in his village. If there is impurity in the village unknowingly, the Brahman should be responsible to the god. The Lāmani *dhāmi* indicated that similar

rules regarding food were observed by higher ranked castes including fasting for a period before becoming possessed by the god. In addition, the high caste *dhāmi* is prohibited from engaging in certain types of agricultural labour such as ploughing and carrying dung. The *dhāmi* is not to take tea in public places such as tea shops because of the potential pollution. The Asinā *dhāmi*, because of his fear of pollution, once refused to sit near a tea shop in which a person had died in an upstairs room several days before. The *dhāmini* described herself as continually worrying about the accidental consumption of ritually impure food, since failure to do so would cause the *picās* who 'shook' on her to make her ill. A Ṭhakuri informant recounted that as a boy he had been possessed by his lineage deity, but because of his service in the Indian army and the impure habits and diet that this involved, the validity of his possession had come into doubt. Now validation could only be reestablished through a period of continuous worship to determine the god's will and through an examination of the accuracy of his predictions. Residence within the god's territory is also an important aspect of the contract implied in the god's 'shaking' on an individual. The Lāmani *dhāmi* explained that before leaving the temple of the goddess for an extended period of time, he had to make a pledge specifying the length of time that would transpire before he would return to the temple. On one occasion when he had overstayed this period, he was blinded and all treatment was ineffective until he returned to his village, at which point his vision returned.

The paraphernalia and techniques employed by the *dhāmi* are associated with the types of situations in which the *dhāmi* becomes possessed. The first is one in which a *dhāmi* 'shakes' in a family's home in order to make a prediction or initially investigate some trouble affecting a family member. The *dhāmi*'s 'shaking' in such a situation is referred to as a *dhāmyaulāi*. A second situation in which possession takes place is a *kali*, involving periods of possession over several days, the object of which is to remove or appease the malevolent effect of a god or spirit that has been previously determined to be 'shaking' on the individual. Generally a *kali* involves the participation of several *dhāmi*. A third situation is one in which the *dhāmi* becomes possessed during a religious procession *(jāt)* or at the temple on the occasions of special worship.

The paraphernalia required for the *dhāmi*'s possession at a *dhāmyaulāi* are simple. A clean place is prepared on the floor for the *dhāmi* to sit upon. This place may be covered by green leaves and a cloth. In front of the *dhāmi* are placed incense, a lamp of clarified butter, some rice grains in a leaf dish, and a gift of money *(bheṭi)* for the god, which the *dhāmi* later keeps. The *bheṭi* need not be offered when the *dhāmi* 'shakes' in his own village, but if it is not offered in any other village, this may be reason for the *dhāmi* refusing to become possessed.

After these preparations have been made, those attending the *dhamyaulāi* gather in the room and begin to call out the deeds and power of the god and the difficulties of the troubled person. The *dhāmi* generally remains silent and sits next to the special place prepared for him. After an initial period the *dhāmi* shifts to the place prepared for him and begins to 'shake' and speak. There are a number of actions that indicate the *dhāmi* is about to be possessed. Just before possession the *dhāmi* will remove his hat *(ţopi)* so that his head will be pure for the god's coming. When the god has left him, the *dhāmi* will replace his *ţopi* indicating that the god has departed. One motion the *dhāmi* may make at the beginning of possession is to bend his elbows and touch his fingers to his shoulders thus indicating that the god is 'riding' on his shoulders. When a *dhāmyaulāi* is held, the *dhāmi* does not play a drum or manipulate any substances or objects to summon the god. The appearance of the god is caused by the petition *(binti)* of the god's devotees coupled with the state of grace existing between the god and the *dhāmi*.

The second type of situation in which the *dhāmi* may become possessed, the performance of *kali*, involves additional items to be placed before him. These may include several types of grain and leaves, lamps, and *ţikā* powder. The playing of drums during the several days and nights on which it occurs is characteristic of the *kali*. The drums are played in a special rhythm by members of the untouchable Damāi caste and are not played by the *dhāmi*. Several *dhāmi* are present on such an occasion and work cooperatively to remove the malevolent spirit believed to be present. The *kali* is frequently, however, a time of competition and even conflict among *dhāmi* to determine whose power is superior. Because of this competition and the resistance of the malevolent god or spirit, the *dhāmi*'s actions at the time of *kali* are frequently dramatic.

A third type of situation in which the *dhāmi* becomes possessed is associated with temple activities. Generally at such times only the *dhāmi* of the principal god *(ţhulo deutā)* of the temple becomes possessed and not the *dhāmi* of subdeities or ancestral spirits. The possession of the *dhāmi* of the principal god on such occasions often involves prophecies regarding the lineage and village welfare for the coming year. At the temples of the various lineage gods, the *dhāmi*'s place of 'shaking' is called the 'black stone' *(kālo pāţ)* and is usually marked by a flat black stone placed in front of the temple. At the more important temple sites, this *kālo pāţ* has evolved into a stone platform about five feet high supported by stone pillars at four corners. At the time of possession the *dhāmi* is carried to the top of this structure so that he can be easily seen and heard. During the worship *(pujā)* within the temple, the *dhāmi* occupies a respected location near the holy place of the god though he does not 'shake' at this time. In the procession *(jāt)* to or from the temple, however, the *dhāmi* 'shakes' and rides upon the shoulders of a man specially selected

by the village. This mode of conveyance is frequently used for *dhāmi* of higher status and symbolically represents the manner in which the god rides on the *dhāmi* himself.

As noted, the actions of the *dhāmi* in various situations may be dramatic. They may include demonstrating immunity to fire, or exceptional strength. They may sometimes include the presentation of an unnatural appearance, depending on the characteristics of the god or spirit possessing the *dhāmi*. In one village, for example, a female ancestral spirit *(picāsini)* and her child possess two of the village men. When in the state of possession one of the men will sit in the lap of the other and the two converse to one another as mother and child.

Malevolent possession is frequently caused by the making of a special oath *(ghāt)* against a person. The term *ghāt* refers to a special oath made to a god or spirit so that it will render justice and trouble the guilty individual. Often *ghāt* are initiated because of inter-village disputes over land, inadequate compensation in cases of wife theft, theft of an article, or bad relations between a woman's home of birth and her home of marriage. Not all deities are approachable for *ghāt* making. This function especially involves assistant deities called *ān bān*, although lineage deities may also be utilized. A number of these assistant deities are believed to be particularly malevolent in disposition and thus able to severely trouble an individual if the aggrieved party has made a *ghāt* with him.

In addition to the oath, the making of the *ghāt* involves the promise of a special gift or special worship to the deity. This promise is usually made in the presence of the god's *dhāmi*. Generally, the *ghāt* is not believed to affect an innocent person, nor does it work well in cases involving the government. In addition, although it is often done in private, it is considered reprehensible for an individual to make a *ghāt* in public against a kinsman or someone within his circle of village relations. Should an unscrupulous *dhāmi* discover this has been done, he may extract payment both for the removal of the malevolent deity and for keeping secret the name of the kinsman who has caused the possession to take place. In such cases, the *dhāmi* may cause burn marks to appear on the man making the *ghāt*, or by casting grain upon those assembled, he may cause the *ghāt*-maker himself to become suddenly possessed.

A technique frequently used to drive out a malevolent deity or spirit is for the god possessing the *dhāmi* to threaten to beat or actually beat the possessed man's body. This technique is believed to be especially effective against minor types of malevolent spirits such as those believed to be found in the forest or at cremation grounds. Possession by such minor spirits is produced by chance or physical proximity; not because of the effect of a *ghāt*.

If such spirits can not be made to depart by intimidation of the superior deity possessing the *dhāmi*, the spirits' demands can usually be ascertained by the *dhāmi* and satisfied.

The actions of the *dhāmi* in such instances might be described as healing and contrasted to justice-making where possession through a *ghāt* is involved. The healing practices of the *dhāmi*, however, do not involve techniques of therapeutic manipulation. A *dhāmi* is not called to treat a broken leg or an illness whose origin is understood, but in the case of a disease of obscure origin, which appears to affect the whole person, a *dhāmi* is consulted. A *dhāmi* of the Sārki (shoemaker) caste once told how a woman of the Kāmi (blacksmith) caste began to run uncontrollably through his village crying that there were snakes squirming in her stomach. Other *dhāmi* were called but were unable to calm her. The Sārki *dhāmi* stated that when he saw the woman the god came to him and filled him with anger. He then beat her, and she was cured.

One technique employed by the *dhāmi* when possessed is to speak in a specialized vocabulary having ambiguous meanings. At times this technique may also involve speaking in unintelligible sounds which are generally described by the villagers as 'pure Tibetan'. The specialized vocabulary used by the *dhāmi* in making predictions includes a number of terms. *Sāhro phal*, literally translated, means 'hard fruit'. It is used by the *dhāmi* to predict the birth of a male child. This term is contrasted to *dhān ko bhus* literally 'the chaff of the rice' which is used to predict the birth of a female child. The god, when speaking, may not refer to himself directly but merely identify himself or herself by referring to one of his or her attributes, saying for example, 'I am grey *(phusro)*'. The villagers, however, are aware that the god speaking is Kedār-Nāth because of Kedār-Nāth's characteristic way of appearing as a yogi smeared with grey ashes. The ambiguity of the *dhāmi*'s statements frequently makes it difficult for the listeners to decide what course of action the god is advising. Once at a *dhāmyaulāi* a young girl troubled by a spirit was told by the *dhāmi* of a goddess that she must do service *(cākari)* at the goddess' hut *(jhupro)*. Until late in the night her relatives argued over the implication of the word *jhupro*. One faction argued that the girl was now dedicated to service at the principal temple of the goddess and should be sent there, disregarding any plans for her marriage. Another faction argued that a small hut for the worship of the god should be built near the girl's home, proceeding with the plans for her marriage.

On one occasion the Laṅgar Sahi *dhāmi*'s 'shaking' differed considerably from the performance of other *dhāmi* in the district. The occasion involved a group of twenty families of Bhotias who had been temporarily displaced from their village because of a local political dispute. When shaking, the *dhāmi* in a characteristically open ended fashion, advised the Bhotias that from three

to six months, or within one year, there would be a resolution of the conflict. On the following Tuesday they should all leave the place where they were temporarily living and travel together to the east. Two aspects of the *dhāmi*'s performance stand out. First, he used a bottle of liquor *(raksi)* as one of the offerings before the god. It was later consumed by all present. The use of liquor in worship is common among Bhotia castes but is not specifically characteristic of Matwāli castes within the district even though the name 'Matwāli' has reference to liquor consumption. Its employment in this instance by the *dhāmi* was quite likely an indication of the close sympathetic relationship between the *dhāmi* and his clients and the fact that the possession took place in an isolated jungle setting away from any of the *dhāmi*'s neighbours of more orthodox caste. A second unusual aspect of the *dhāmi*'s 'shaking' occurred at one point during his possession. An ill woman was brought to him, and filling his mouth with water, he blew it forcefully into her face. When this technique was discussed with other *dhāmi*, they felt it to be most unusual because of the ritual pollution believed to be caused by human sputum even though technically in this case it would be the god's sputum. The *dhāmi*'s use of liquor and this technique indicate a less rigid observance of Hindu purity-impurity, where Tibetan Bhotia peoples are concerned.

The *dhāmi*'s consciousness or state of mind when possessed is an important part of the local model of possession. Descriptions of sensations immediately preceeding possession vary, but generally the actual state of possession is defined as one of senselessness. The Lāmani *dhāmi* and the *dhāmi* of Laṅgar Sahi described the commencement of possession as feeling like a lamp or fire was burning inside the body accompanied by palpitations of the heart and the beginning of trembling throughout the body. *Dhāmi* frequently comment that when their possession has ended, they cannot recall what they have previously said while possessed. The Asinā *dhāmi*, however, de-emphasized senselessness as an aspect of possession arguing that some *dhāmi* may become senseless and some not, depending on the nature of the god. The *dhāmi* further asserted, 'Even if I am not shaking the things spoken by me may come true as a message from the god'.

The *dhāmi* of Kedār-Nāth emphasized the effect on his consciousness of the villagers' pleas for the god's appearance.

> The god will not shake at ordinary times when people are gathered. Only with great difficulty, with the weeping and pleading and bowing of the heads of the people will the god come. When the people plead to the god, my head begins to feel as if there is a shaking within it. Then I feel the trembling within my body and it begins to shake.

Later, the Kedār-Nāth *dhāmi* stated that because of his power when possessed a sick man from his village became 'a *little* better'. This statement represents a candid attitude found among some *dhāmi* regarding the limitations of their power when possessed. One of the most respected *dhāmi* of the district, when asked privately if the god was actually present in him each time he shook, disclosed that there were four circumstances in which he might shake: first, when the god spoke to him directly, the message coming like a 'push' on him and his speech expressing the words exactly; second, when the god spoke directly to him, and he then added a brief interpretation to the words; third, when he would shake without the god's presence simply for the assurance of the people; and fourth, when something had been shown to him in a dream and he later related this. The Lāmani *dhāmi* confided the following limitation on his influence when possessed, 'If I am disturbed or in an unsettled mood, even though I shake the true thing will not take place'. The Asinā *dhāmi* emphasized the influence of an individual's fate regardless of a *dhāmi*'s prediction arguing that in the end everything is the earning of fate *(karma ko kamāi)*.

Relationship of the Dhāmi's Role to Other Societal Roles

The *dhāmi*'s role and that of the Brahman priest generally occupy separate social niches. The *dhāmi*, however, participates in a wider variety of social activities. This is because the *dhāmi* is able to combine both strictly religious with secular areas of concern. The *dhāmi* has the ability to function not only in terms of the overall concerns of the community but also in terms of the daily uncertainties of the villager's life which the broad religious framework of the priest does not directly address. It should be noted that there is also a category of Brahman practitioners, astrologers, who also can relate to these daily uncertainties. Astrologers are generally of Jaisi Brahman status although they also may be Upādhyāya Brahmans as well as other castes. When skilful, their services are in constant demand. In terms of the needs he addresses himself to, the position of the astrologer takes a secondary place to that of the *dhāmi* who can direct the dynamism of the deity to a wide variety of individual uncertainties. Since the powers and abilities of deities and spirits vary, an individual has the option to consult several *dhāmi* and thus apply multiple approaches to his problem.

In the formal religious context of the temple, the *dhāmi*'s role is sanctified by the priest who places the first *ṭikā* of the god on the *dhāmi* after the worship has been performed. As noted previously the *dhāmi* plays an important role at temple celebrations through his presence and possession at the *kālo pāt* outside the temple. Generally, the relationship between the temple priest and the *dhāmi* is a cooperative one. This cooperation can become strained if the *dhāmi* begins to develop exceptional influence and

a wide following. When this cooperation is broken, it may sometimes be expressed in the refusal of the priest to give the *dhāmi* the first *ṭikā* of the god. During the period of fieldwork this happened at an important local temple, when the priest placed the first *ṭikā* on the wall of the temple instead of the *dhāmi*.

Often at less important temples the *dhāmi* may have increased responsibilities, such as the responsibility for the store house or treasury *(bhandār)* of the god. In this position the *dhāmi* is responsible for the care of the vessels for worship and other valuables of the deity. Even if another individual is storekeeper of the temple, the *dhāmi* is often charged with watching over the conduct of this individual and may remove the temple valuables from him if misconduct is suspected.

The *dhāmi*'s role is also important for the resolution of disputes that are secular in origin. Frequently in inter-village conflicts the *dhāmi* will be called so that the god can decide the issue. At times, when there is a high potential for conflict between villages or rival lineages such as at festivals, the *dhāmi* is positioned between them to act as a peace-keeper. Frequently, his religious and peace-keeping roles result in the recognition of the *dhāmi* as a leader within his own lineage. Particularly, in the case of low-ranked castes, the *dhāmi*, who has influence over high caste clients, is considered by his lineage mates to be a leader who must be consulted before any important decision is made. Recently, when such a low caste *dhāmi* asked for assistance in agricultural labour, he received help from his own villagers as well as women from a neighbouring Brahman village.

It is indicative of the high status and central role of the *dhāmi* of *ṭhulo deutā* that when such a *dhāmi* dies, worship at the temple ceases until the period of mourning for that *dhāmi* has ended. Villagers should not worship at other temples until this period has been completed. Individuals, however, who are possessed by assistant deities or ancestral spirits are also respected as *dhāmi*. The status distinctions among *dhāmi* are usually symbolized by the *ṭhulo deuta*'s *dhāmi*'s central involvement in temple activities. Frequently, in a procession the *dhāmi* of the major god will be carried on the shoulders of the minor god's *dhāmi*. Precedence among *dhāmi* is often indicated by the offering of the first *ṭikā*. For example, the Asinā *dhāmi* has the right to place the first *ṭikā* on the *dhāmi* of Kedār-Nāth because these gods are related as older and younger brothers. Similarly, the *dhāmi* of these gods will greet each other as brothers. If the precedence of the *dhāmi* is not established and they 'shake' at the same time during a *kali*, there is the potential for conflict. In one such instance, at the home of a sick man, the *dhāmi* of Lāmani challenged the authority of one of the older, more respected *dhāmi* of the district. This latter *dhāmi* jumped up and grasped one of the roof beams of the house to demonstrate the power of the god, and the

Lāmani *dhāmi* pulled him down and criticized him for not having given proper respect to an assistant deity. The older man took off his own sacred thread and placed it on the Lāmani *dhāmi*. He then said that he now placed this man into his hands. The older *dhāmi* thus cleverly resolved this conflict by yielding to the *dhāmi* of Lāmani, but he did this in a way which indicated his precedence over the Lāmani *dhāmi* by giving him his sacred thread as a Brahman priest would give to his disciple.

Control Over Resources and Values

The *dhāmi*'s control over resources and values within the society is especially reflected in his right to the gift *(bheṭi)* given to the god when he 'shakes'. The large homes built by some important *dhāmi* indicate that this right to *bheṭi* can result in considerable benefit if the *dhāmi* has prosperous and grateful clients. Because it is generally believed that the powerful and prestigious gods require impressive gifts, it is also believed that they are the most likely to effect cures, and there is a considerable demand for the services of their *dhāmi*. This is one reason why the inheritance of possession is an important factor among the *dhāmi* of major gods. At the more important temples, the *dhāmi* will also share in the general offerings given to the temple. In distributing these offerings after sacrifice, the status of the priest is recognized first, and he is given the principal share of such proceeds. It is locally said that after the priest's share, if the storekeeper of the god takes two *ānnā* (about twelve *paisā*), the *dhāmi* will take ten *paisā* indicating that their distribution is close to equal. *Dhāmi* of lesser gods and ancestral spirits receive the gifts offered to these gods at their special times of worship. In regard to such minor gods, it should be noted that in the examples of possession encountered in this research women were mainly possessed by ancestral spirits.

In spite of the exceptions, few *dhāmi* become wealthy because of their possession. The prohibitions on plowing and carrying dung in addition to the considerable time spent in travelling to various villages makes it difficult for the *dhāmi* to complete his agricultural work. The *bheṭi* of the *dhāmi* is usually only a small amount. It is often the villagers' strategy, when in need of a *dhāmi*, to call several *dhāmi* of less important deities. Each of these *dhāmi* is given only a small gift, in the hope that one of these minor deities will be able to effect a cure. One *dhāmi*'s experience expresses the frustrations felt by many.

> In Baisākh (mid April to mid May) I went to ten to fifteen places to shake and to ten to fifteen places this month. Sometimes it becomes necessary for me to falsely promise to go to a place because I am called to so many places and only go to the most important. It is peoples' nature

> to call the *dhāmi* even for only a small matter. There is no time for me to see that my land is cultivated. A great deal of my own expense is required in this position ... I cannot become a government service holder because of my service to the god. I must be present at important meetings at which other people wear fine clothes. To preserve my dignity I must also try to wear suitable clothes. How can I be present at such meetings wearing a torn cap and trousers? Such is the difficulty of a *dhāmi*.

The *dhāmini* sums up the attitude of resignation of the *dhāmi* or *dhāmini* to his or her role. 'I cannot say it is good to be a *dhāmini*, but if a god has taken an interest in 'shaking' on a person how can that person refuse this?'

Comparisons with Other Research

Several elements of the *dhāmi*'s role found in my research in far western Nepal differ from those ascribed to the shaman or *jhākri* found in other areas of Nepal (Hitchcock: 1967, 1974). For example, in recruitment to the position of the *dhāmi* as contrasted to that of the shaman there is no concept of apprenticeship or of a set of skills that are learned by a pupil from a master nor is there a fully developed concept of a spirit journey that must be undertaken in order to gain control over the deity (Gaborieau 1969:45). Rather it is the god who selects the person on whom he will 'shake' and the time. For this reason the *dhāmi* can best be described as a spirit medium, a vessel or vehicle which, because of the existence of a state of rapport between himself and the god, is chosen for possession. This differs from the shaman who strives to exert control over the god. Often his initial possession will be difficult and confusing for the *dhāmi*. With subsequent experiences, however, they occur more easily. The *dhāmi* is not believed to establish increasing control over the deity, but rather he is thought to have placed himself in a more correct state of receptivity for the god. This is perhaps a subtle but nevertheless important difference in emphasis. For example, it is significant that the *dhāmi* in contrast to the *jhākri* does not use a drum to call the god. Drumming in far western Nepal is thought to be pleasing to the god and is regularly done at the temple; however, it is the role of the Damāi castes to drum (Gaborieau 1969:34). At the time of drumming, the *dhāmi* sits awaiting the arrival of the god. Even for an experienced *dhāmi*, there are times when the god does not choose to immediately possess him. At such times, it is not the *dhāmi*'s control that will finally summon the god but rather the pleadings of the god's devotees. In this regard the whole context of the *dhāmyaulāi* illustrates this feature of the spirit medium as contrasted to the shaman. It is primarily the villagers who make the petition *(binti)* to the god rather than the *dhāmi*.

The performance of the *dhāmi*, as we have noted, does not essentially involve the use of therapeutic substances or any materials considered to have intrinsic power. Those substances placed before the *dhāmi* are placed there simply to please the god. The acts of the *dhāmi* during possession are considered to be demonstrations of the god's power rather than techniques of inherent potency as is the case with the shaman. It is noteworthy that during the period of research no *dhāmi* was possessed by more than a single deity.

In the area of the relationship of the *dhāmi*'s role with other roles in the society important comparisons between the *dhāmi* and *jhākri* can be made. The *dhāmi* of major gods has a well defined role at the temple. Even if it is only a minor deity or ancestral spirit that possesses the *dhāmi*, this deity or spirit will either have a relationship to the principal god or goddess of the temple, acting as his or her assistant, or have a place in the overall local hierarchy of deities. Because of these interlocking relationships, it is the responsibility of the *ṭhulo deutā*, through their *dhāmi*, to assure that the minor deities are granted their prerogatives and respect lest the minor deity trouble the *ṭhulo deutā*. The regularized position of the *dhāmi* in regard to the temple and its hierarchy of deities contrasts to the non-involvement with the temple of the *jhākri* (Gaborieau 1969:41). For the *dhāmi*, it is not his own personality that is the source of his acceptance and influence with the villagers but rather the well known personality and characteristics of the deity as personified by the *dhāmi* which holds the villagers' attention. The involvement of the *dhāmi* in the making of a *ghāt* to obtain justice is heightened by the importance of his role at the temple. The *dhāmi* can serve as a type of supernatural omen because of the regularized set of relationships interconnecting his possessing deity and other deities. Thus a person troubled by a particular spirit can contact the *dhāmi* of that spirit or related spirits to negotiate the manner in which to appease the spirit. Likewise, in terms of the command over resources, the *dhāmi* in the west would appear to be in a substantially different position because of his right to share in the resources of the temple in addition to the gifts of those for whom he 'shakes'.

The research on the Matwāli *dhāmi* of the god Maṣṭā in Western Nepal by Marc Gaborieau (1969) generally substantiates the findings of this research. In my research area, however, Maṣṭā does not have a widespread importance but is found only in the north eastern region of the district. The differences in the two areas may be accounted for by the greater influence in this area of immigrant Hindu groups of an early period. Thus, in this area, compared to Gaborieau's area of study, individual lineage *kul deutā* and their *dhāmi* have an important role. In some instances these gods have grown from individual lineage status to district wide importance. The subdeities, or *ān bān*, of major deities

also have a more active and established role than indicated by Gaborieau (1969:30). Often, they are located in small temples of their own adjacent to the *ţhulo deutā*, and their *dhāmi* may have considerable renown, particularly if an *ān bān* who 'shakes' on a *dhāmi* is known to be effective in *ghāt*-making.

In the research area it was recognized that some of the reputedly older gods have their original location on hill tops near villages. There is, however, generally no maintenance of duplicate temples at these places, although Gaborieau (1969:26) found temples of the god being maintained both near the village as well as on the mountaintop. In my findings the place of the *dhāmi*, when possessed, is always outside the temple as Gaborieau (1969: 27) states is the case in some areas. As noted, the place of the *dhāmi* outside the temple frequently takes the form of a raised stone structure. In contrast to Gaborieau's (1969:37) findings, the *dhāmi* did not employ bells during possession, although they were prominently displayed throughout the temple. A few *dhāmi* I encountered, such as the *dhāmi* of Laṅgar Sahi, displayed a long braid of hair as a mark of their status. More frequently, however, the *dhāmi*'s status was symbolized by his heavy silver bracelets and small gold earrings, which Gaborieau (1969:31) notes is the case to the west of the Karnali.

In some aspects Berreman's (1963) information on spirit possession in the Indian Himalayan region adjacent to far western Nepal differed from my research. Berreman describes an individual called a *bāki* who would become possessed. At such times the *bāki* plays a drum, chants special phrases, and performs certain acts to 'call' the god (Berreman 1963:89). As noted *dhāmi* in the area of my research did not do their own drumming nor seek to impel the god in this manner. Berreman states that a hill area *(pahāṛi)* shaman does not take part in exorcism nor in ceremonies in which the shaman's spirit speaks to the afflicting spirit. Such tasks are done, he finds, by specialists of inferior rank to shamans (Berreman 1963:90). In far western Nepal, however, *dhāmi* were regularly engaged in such activities and when successful achieved considerable recognition for this. Villagers, in the area I worked were aware of the special *pujā* described by Berreman (1963: 92) which results in the god's possessing family members, but it rarely takes place because of the expense of hiring the special low caste musicians to perform at that time.

The *dhāmi* as a spirit medium and the shaman as a controller of spirits are aspects of a similar phenomenon of possession, but it is mistaken to consider the shaman as a spirit medium who has graduated to controlling spirits (Lewis 1971:56). More likely these two roles relate to different processes of possession. In one, the *dhāmi* represents a process involving all powerful immanent deities or spirits who choose to possess an individual, and in the other, the shaman represents a process whereby through

earthly sources and techniques of control the individual can call the more distant deities and gain power over them. Furthermore, it is possible that different types of possession relate to different social contexts. In the case of the *dhāmi*, there is a pervasive ritualized context exemplified by the importance of Brahmanical performances in relation to an integrated local hierarchy of gods and spirits. In these circumstances the role of possession draws for its dynamism not upon ritual itself but upon the latent power of the hierarchy of deities. In this context, possession expresses itself in the form of spirit mediumship. In social contexts where the ritualist's role is absent or its emphasis less pervasive and where the pantheon of deities is less formally established the role of possession will draw upon the source of power offered by specialized techniques and materials. Thus in both instances possession will find expression in means complementary to other aspects of the society and thus provide cohesion to the society's religion.

Walter Winkler

XIV

SHAMANISM AMONG THE RAJI OF SOUTHWEST NEPAL

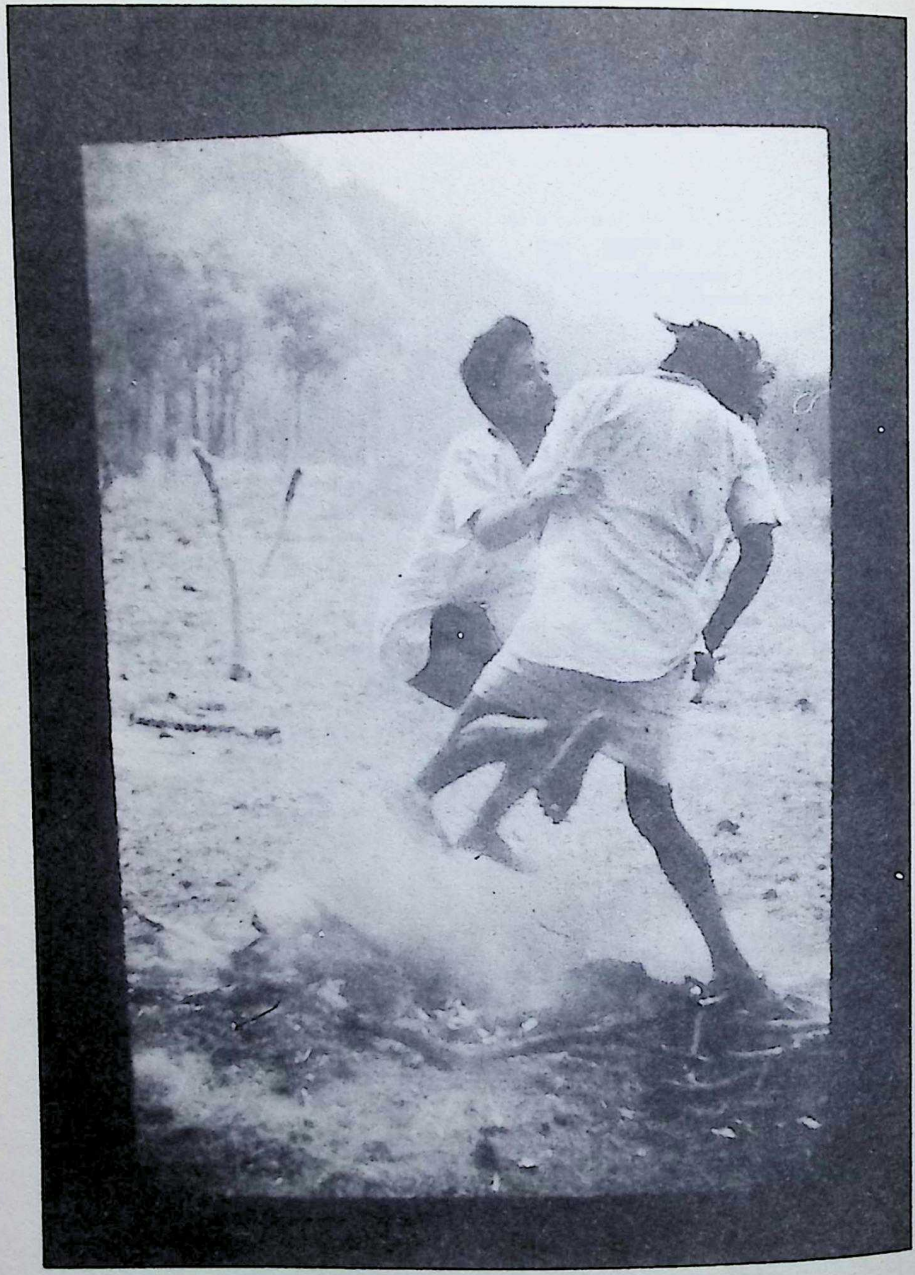
Scattered throughout western Nepal and adjacent areas of India are small groups of the little known Raji tribe.[1] Originally nomadic hunters and gatherers, this Tibeto-Burman speaking tribe has splintered into several groups which are now in various stages of becoming settled agriculturalists and acculturated to neighbouring castes and tribes.[2] This paper will be concerned with shamanism among the completely settled Purbia (eastern) Raji, although to a certain extent material presented here will also be applicable to other Rāji groups found in southwest Nepal.[3]

The Purbia Raji make up about one-half, e.g. ca. 600, of the total Raji population and are located primarily in the districts of Bardia, Banke and Surkhet in southwest Nepal. The major concentration is to be found in the relatively isolated Babai River Valley, where most of the research upon which this article is based was conducted. This particular area lies roughly between two cultural zones: one associated with the large Tharu tribe, located primarily in the low-lying forested area south of the Himalayan range, and the other associated with the Pahari (hillmen), a general term applied to Hindu castes located in the mountains.[4]

Becoming a Shaman

The importance of shamanism in Raji society may be summarized by a phrase I heard repeated numerous times: 'If there was no *gurau*, we would all be dead.' The Raji use the Tharu terms *gurau* or *guruwa* to designate a shaman, who is always male.[5] The defining characteristic of the *gurau* is his ability to become possessed at will by his tutelary deity in order to deal directly with the spirit world. Although not every man has a desire to become a *gurau*, I would estimate that roughly 80% of the male population over 30 years of age has been initiated. Only a few of these men continue on to become practising shamans.

No special calling or traumatic experience serves as the basis for a man's decision to become a *gurau*. Quite practical reasons play the major role, e.g. the acquisition of a tutelary spirit in order to better protect a man and his household from evil spirits



Two Raji shaman initiates 'dancing' through the fire while possessed

and the attacks of witches, the status associated with this greater power, and the apparent economic advantages to be acquired. The life of a *gurau* is idealized by many Raji who envy him receiving free meals and liquor in addition to a yearly tribute and occasional supplementary payments as well. He does receive some remuneration, but not to the extent imagined, and negative aspects of being a shaman have discouraged several men from undergoing the initiation or continuing a shamanizing career. Some found possession frightening, while others feared attaining only enough power to attract the interest of evil forces but not enough to cope with them. Only a few informants mentioned such practical difficulties as being called away at odd times and in bad weather and not having time to attend adequately to their fields.

A major reason that there are few experienced shamans in Raji society is that rights to yearly payments from certain villages are held by only a few shamans. Unless a shaman leaves, dies or sells his rights, it is difficult for any other man to acquire experience. Although some less experienced *gurau* do shamanize in villages under the control of an experienced one, they do not receive yearly payments nor participate in major festivals, and this discourages others from trying. Furthermore, in order to learn the work of a 'big' shaman, one must find a *gurau* who is willing to teach the necessary spells and rituals. In the Babai River Valley several men were interested in learning from a 'big' *gurau*, but he rarely took the time to instruct them. Since no formal training is involved, it normally takes several years for a man to acquire the necessary knowledge. Although shamanism is not inherited, it is not surprising in view of the above that most 'big' shamans learned their work from close relatives, who generally are more accessible and willing to give their time. They also present no potential physical or economic threat to the shaman.

An experienced shaman is not a full-time specialist, and he must do agricultural work of his own in order to gain a basic subsistence. He has rights and responsibilities to certain villages where he must go in times of need and at particular times during the year when his participation in ceremonies is necessary. For his work, he receives grain from each household, the amount of which varies according to its economic position. The *gurau* normally receives 50-95 lbs. of paddy from larger landowning households (over 5 acres) and about 20-50 lbs. from tenant farmers.

The collection of grain usually takes place after completion of a religious ceremony following the rice harvest. One *gurau* claimed that the amount of grain gathered from the 10 villages he serves (of which only four contain Raji) is insufficient to meet the yearly needs of his family. However, since his own crop yield is sufficient, he usually is able to sell most of the grain obtained from the villagers.

Apart from the free meals and liquor the *gurau* receives when making 'house calls', he also keeps the rice offerings, chickens sacrificed at offerings made for witches, and parts of animals sacrificed at other ceremonies. At major *pūjā* (acts of worship) the animals sacrificed are divided equally among those present. However, if money is given in lieu of an animal offering, the *gurau* keeps this for himself.

People who make a yearly payment to the shaman are not obligated to make monetary offerings at séances, but they may do so in serious cases, and frequently villagers from areas outside the *gurau*'s jurisdiction pay him for his services. These payments rarely exceed 1-2 rupees, roughly a half-day's wages in this area. In the case of the main Babai River *gurau* such payments were quickly spent on liquor and had little long-term economic impact.

Since the *gurau*, as will be explained in more detail later, has complete control over the divination of causes of misfortune, it appears that he is able to regulate to a degree (consciously or unconsciously) the amount and types of offerings, and, therefore, what he personally will acquire from such offerings. Not surprisingly, wealthy landowners seem to be bothered by spirits demanding more extravagant sacrifices than the poorer people. In any event the shaman appears to be a shrewd judge of the situation and does not ask for more than he feels the people are prepared to offer.

Although it rarely occurs, the *gurau* may earn money by teaching spells, or he may sell his rights to one or more villagers. After a flood had swept away most of his belongings, the most experienced *gurau* in the area, Naina Lodhial, agreed to sell his rights to a small village for 100 rupees. The village had only four houses in 1970, but it was expanding rapidly, and I estimate that the shaman would have earned back the 100 rupees within two years. However, the man who originally offered the sum retracted his offer after months had passed without the shaman teaching him the necessary spells and rituals.

Although the economic advantages of being a shaman are obvious, these are offset to a degree by the time that a shaman has to spend away from his own work at home and in his fields. Some of the villages served by the *gurau* are a full day's walk apart. In times of illness, the pressure on him becomes particularly intense. He controls this situation somewhat by lying, and frequently does not keep promises to go to villages to which he has been called. Occasionally villagers, who will wait no longer for him to come of his own accord, come and take him forcibly. Such pressures help explain why the *gurau* does not mind other shamans working in his area, especially since he receives his annual payment irrespective of their work.

It is obvious that the shaman would find it difficult to become wealthy without a large number of villages under his jurisdiction. This is normally not the case, although I do know of one *gurau* elsewhere who serves over 20 villages and is considered to be relatively wealthy. This regular system of payment to a shaman differs from situations among other tribes in the Himalayan region where the shaman either receives payment at each curing session (Berreman 1964:58) or only if the patient becomes well (Srivastava 1958:234).

The relationships between shamans are not always so amiable as one may surmise from the above. *Gurau* east and west of the Babai Valley resent other shamans working in their villages. This may be due to their being less knowledgeable, and thus more open to critical comparisons with other shamans. Personality factors undoubtedly play a role here also, as these *gurau* were considered to be argumentative and were more than a little feared by their neighbours.

Because of his ability to deal with evil spirits, the position of the shaman invariably appears to have an element of ambiguity in it. However, the Raji believe that most *gurau* do not misuse their powers, although to be on the safe side they treat a *gurau* very circumspectly when by chance brought into conflict with him or his family. Informants were much more apt to picture shamans as fighting with sorcery among themselves, something which Naina denied completely.

Certainly the beneficial aspects of having a shaman in the society far outweigh the negative ones. The Raji feel certain that there would be a lot fewer of them alive today were it not for the *gurau*, and the remote possibility of a *gurau* causing harm is not enough to overshadow the gratitude and respect that he is shown wherever he goes.

In the past some of the shamans in the western Tarai region of Nepal were appointed by the government to protect areas from the depredations of wild animals, particularly tigers. These shamans were given the right to collect payment from the people for their work (thus perhaps giving rise to the system of payments found today) and received a *lālmohar* (royal seal) verifying their position. (Bista 1967:113). They could, however, be fined if unsuccessful. None of the Raji *gurau* in the Babai Valley are thought to be descended from such shamans, but a Raji *gurau* a day's walk west is descended from one and is even today referred to as the rāj (government) *gurau*. His offerings and spells are thought to be especially efficacious.

It appears that the Raji tend to involve the factors of time and space in reaching their judgements concerning the powers of shamans. The further away in time and space, the more powerful.

Even though the Raji have no myths regarding the origin of shamanism, the most miraculous powers, needless to say, are attributed to the *gurau* of the distant past. They are all thought to have been able to turn themselves into tigers at will, catch bullets in their teeth, and perform numerous other similar feats. These abilities are not necessarily thought to have been lost forever, as it is felt that with knowledge of the correct spells such feats could be repeated even today. Indeed, I have heard of Tharu shamans who are believed to possess such powers.

Initiation

The shaman initiation appears to contain two elements: an initial traumatic experience and a formal initiation, combined in a single event.[6] The initiation ceremony marks the true beginning, not the completion, of the learning process. No one can become a *gurau* or even become possessed without having gone through it. Once initiated, a man must prove his ability by curing others and conducting rituals before he will be accepted by the community as a true *gurau*. There is, however, no further ceremony to mark a man as a 'big' shaman.

In what follows, I will present a brief summary of a shaman initiation I attended in April, 1970. It began on the night of Sano Dasaĩ, a festival widespread in Nepal. Men gathered near the village *thān* (worship place) at 9.00 p.m. Five *gurau* and eleven initiates were present. The latter sat in a circle with their hats removed and hands pressed together before their faces. Each *gurau* had a metal plate containing *achetā* (hulled rice used in worship). An additional plate with *achetā* was placed in the centre of the circle. All gave salutations to the plate, representing the deities being called, and each *gurau* offered liquor to his respective tutelary deity before consuming some himself.

While two *gurau* began chanting, another played the drum *(mādal)*. Within a few minutes some of the *gurau* became possessed and began 'dancing' in a swaying motion as their breathing grew heavy and their eyes closed. Naina, the *gurau* chiefly in charge of the initiation, yelled out '*chal* Bhawani' (act Bhawani) and threw *achetā* on the initiates, some of whom quickly became possessed. After about 20 minutes the drumming and singing stopped, and the deities left those men who had been possessed.

A *gurau* discovered through divination with rice that some initiates had not been possessed because a witch had kept the deities from coming. Those initiates who became possessed were given liquor as an offering to their new tutelary deities.

After about ten minutes the drumming and singing began again, and the session continued as before. Such sessions were repeated

with little variation until after midnight. As a goat could not be found for the sacrifice - which normally would occur the next morning - the initiation was postponed until the following day.

It began again at noon and continued for a few hours as described above until it became clear that a goat still could not be obtained, and the initiation was postponed again until the next day.

After the men gathered at the village *thān* at noon, a fire was built and then spread out to form a layer of hot coals. Then while possessed by their tutelary deities, the initiates 'danced' through the coals at will. Next, two *gurau* took each initiate in turn and held him while a third *gurau* used a grain of hulled rice to make short cuts in parts of the initiate's body. First his forehead, then his tongue, the right side of his chest, the right side of his thigh, and finally the top of his right foot were cut. Afterwards the *gurau* mixed the grain of rice and *achetā*, said a spell over them, and gave them to the initiate. The deity left the initiate's body, and the initiate poured it a libation of liquor.

After a brief pause, the initiates again became possessed and 'danced' around a tree which formed a part of the village *thān*. The village priest *(pujāri)* had previously tied a red strip of cloth around this tree and cleared away brush at its base. *Achetā* was given to the initiates, and as each threw it at the tree, the deity possessing him immediately left his body.

The goat was brought, and the *pujāri* cut off its head with a bill-hook. He dragged its body clockwise around the tree and poured blood onto the *achetā* which was then used to give *tikā* (auspicious markings) to all the people present. The *gurau* and the initiates shared in the division of the meat.

This essentially completed the initiation, but one initiate had never become possessed (and therefore did not participate in the final day's activities). The *gurau* decided to try again that evening in the man's home. It was thought that a witch had hindered the initiate's house deities from coming to the village *thān*, and inside his home the witch would be less able to cause difficulties. Although sessions in which the other initiates became possessed continued through the night, the man himself never showed the slightest sign of possession, and the *gurau* left the next morning convinced that a powerful witch had been at work.

It might be of interest to examine more closely some of the events which occurred in the initiation. Naina explained that the *gurau* call all the gods of the village, and they can possess any initiate they desire. However, it is invariably a house god of the initiate which first possesses him and becomes his tutelary

deity. The *gurau* use divination with rice in order to determine which deities are present and whether or not a witch is causing difficulties. If a witch knows the correct spells, she can block deities from attending the initiation. The shamans throw *achetā* at the initiates in order to frighten away evil spirits and also as an offering to the deities (cf. Rahmann 1959:743). The calling of the deities and the protection of initiates from evil spirits and witches are considered the primary functions of the *gurau* at initiations. The more shamans present, the more protection afforded the initiates. Furthermore, it is essential that at least one 'big' *gurau* from the area be present at the initiation, as only he knows all the deities and spirits and is able to deal adequately with them.

Although any man may drum, only the *gurau* know the chant, called *pachāra*, which is used exclusively at initiations. The combination of a distinctive drum beat and chant is said to be infallible in calling the gods. However, no special drum is used, nor for that matter are any objects used which are unique to the initiation only.

Initiates breathe heavily and 'dance' about while possessed, because the deities are in a state of excitement and their power is difficult for the men to contain. Normally *gurau* would not leave their place when possessed at a séance.

Theoretically, all initiates should purify themselves by bathing and wearing clean clothes at the initiation. However, only a few did this at the one described. Although it was said that hats were removed simply in order to make men more holy *(pabitra)*, some *gurau* claim that at séances the head is kept uncovered to allow the spirit to enter the body (cf. Crooke 1968 I:158; Rahmann 1959:701).

The ability of the initiates to step through fire without feeling pain or being burned was thought to be proof that they were truly possessed by deities. Even when one man burned his hands, Raji bystanders simply felt that he had not been possessed *at that moment* and did not assume that he had been faking possession the entire time. In this rite we see the belief frequently encountered among shamanism throughout the world that shamans are 'masters over fire' (Eliade 1964:206).

Raji believe that the cutting of the chief body parts is a way of offering their blood to their tutelary deities. This is thought to be one of the most efficacious offerings that can be made. The fact that there is no noticeable bleeding from the 'cuts' is said to be due to possession by the deity, for a normal person would shed more blood. One man added that the deity drank the blood so quickly that it was not visible to humans.

The rice given to initiates at this time is kept for occasions when the initiate is in special need of his tutelary's help. The Raji do not perceive the cutting of the body as representing in some way the initiate's own death. However, the symbolism of ritual death, where the initiate's body is mystically cut into pieces, is a feature common at shaman initiations among many tribes (Eliade 1964:43; Rahmann 1959:746), and may underlie the practice found among the Raji also.

Although there was no tree climb, symbolizing an ascent to the heavens as in initiations elsewhere, (cf. Rahmann 1959:738) a tree did figure prominently in the Raji initiation, as we have seen. It was here that the tutelary deities of the initiates were collectively worshipped. The throwing of *achetā* at the tree by the possessed initiate is suggestive of a transference rite, in which a deity passes out of one object (here the initiate's body) and into another (the tree).

The red cloth tied around the tree and the sacrificial goat were meant as collective offerings to all the deities. Red is a colour associated with the most powerful female house deities, one of which invariably becomes the tutelary deity of the initiate. These deities are usually Durgā and Kālikā (in Hindu tradition a fierce form of Durgā, although perceived by the Raji as a distinct deity) and indicates one reason why the initiation takes place at Dasai. When a *gurau* yells out '*chal* Bhawani' during the initiation, he is referring primarily to these major female deities. The Dasaĩ festival is associated with their worship, although few Raji know the mythological basis for this association. Raji view the festival primarily as a time to worship their house gods and ancestors, and Durgā is seen as an important house god rather than as a major deity requiring community worship.[7] In fact worship at Dasaĩ only takes place in the home.

Shamanic initiations normally take place at the Ṭhulo Dasaĩ festival which occurs in September-October, as few Raji celebrate Sano Dasaĩ. Initiations are rare, only two others having occurred in a ten year period in the Babai Valley. However, they may take place elsewhere, and a few men have been initiated at other villages in the recent past.

The initiation depicted above was also atypical in that it involved a considerable number of men (I had agreed to supply the goat and liquor, thus alleviating the costs involved for the initiates). Due to the number involved, the initiation had to take place at the village *thān*, whereas normally it would take place in the home of one of the initiates and not involve more than three or four men in addition to the *gurau*.

In a home the initiates sit facing the centre pole of the house, at the foot of which is invariably found a Durgā *thān*. The centre

pole receives special ritual treatment at the time it is erected, and one might interpret it as representing an *axis mundi* or link between the earth and the heavens. Such poles are important features of shamanic initiations elsewhere, especially where the element of ascent into the heavens plays a more important role in the shamanistic tradition (Eliade 1964:492).

One might ask why the Raji bother to go through an initiation to gain a tutelary deity when a man already worships the deity in his home. They explained it was due to the special relationship which is established. Most initiates are young men either recently married or about to be, and they would like to have the extra protection that a tutelary deity offers. The deity is more willing to help a man it possesses, and he in turn can make special offerings to it, such as that of his own blood, which guarantees its assistance in times of need.

Raji distinguish loosely between tutelary deities and helping deities, the latter simply aiding a man by giving him strength without actually possessing him. The tutelary deity is called *agwāni* (leader), which is a term also used to designate the village headman. Helping deities are usually other house gods (particularly the lineage diety) or spirits of deceased shamans in the family line.

After completion of the initiation, those men who wish to continue on and eventually become 'big' *gurau*, in charge of one or more villages, begin to learn *mantra* (spells) and the associated rituals. Although knowledge of spells is by no means confined strictly to the *gurau*, a thorough knowledge of them is a defining characteristic of the *gurau*. Uninitiated men who claim extensive knowledge of *mantra*, may be suspected of being witches. Becoming a 'big' *gurau* in the eyes of most Raji involves the learning of the necessary spells, and the rituals are considered secondary.

Although the term *mantra* is often loosely used to refer to any sacred language, more precisely it means a formal, established set of words which will bring about an effect through supernatural power. Theoretically *mantra* should be spoken exactly as they were first learned. In reality they vary somewhat on different occasions; words and lines may be left out or repeated. Often spells are not fully understood. It is not considered necessary for a man to have an understanding of their meanings for them to be effective, although they clearly had meanings originally.[8] *Mantra* used by the Raji are either in the Nepāli or Thāru languages and frequently mention places and names of deities which are not otherwise found in Raji religion.

To be effective, *mantra* should be passed on verbally, those learned from books or in dreams being considered inferior (cf. Danielou 1964:337). Spells vary considerably in their importance

and power, the most dangerous ones requiring special rituals when they are taught. This involves at minimum an oath made not to use them to harm the *gurau* or his family and offerings made to the *gurau*'s tutelary deity.

Divination

The *gurau* is the diviner *par excellence* because only he can become possessed at will. In addition to possession, he frequently employs mechanical means of divination involving the manipulation of material objects. The latter are known by many laymen as well as the *gurau*.

Certainly the most common method employed involves the use of hulled rice *(achetā)* (cf. Höfer 1973:55). A few pieces are taken from a small pile in a plate, and a general category, such as house deity, witch, evil spirit *(bhut)*, etc. is named. The pieces are counted to see if they number odd or even. If they come out even seven times in succession, the category named is the causative agency of, say, an illness. The process is then repeated to narrow down the specific entity involved within that category (except in the case of the witch, as no specific person is named).

Such is the system in theory. In reality the *gurau* normally short circuits this time-consuming process and simply names an agency which he intuitively feels is responsible. He admitted this to me, but, needless to say, he would not do so to other Raji, as there must be in their minds some procedure employed to show the answer had a supernatural origin.

Occasionally the *gurau* will divine the cause of an illness by feeling the patient's pulse. If no pulse is felt in the right wrist, this indicates that one of the major deities is the cause. If there is none in the left wrist, then an evil spirit or witch is thought to be at work. If a pulse is felt in both wrists, the cause is a natural one. (No pulse felt in both wrists would mean there was no need for a *gurau*). Obviously this only limits the causes to general categories, and the *gurau* must follow up this method with some other means of divination. A stick or piece of cloth are occasionally used. These are first measured, and if the *gurau* finds upon remeasuring them with his hand that they do not equal their initial lengths, the entity he named is held responsible.

All the above methods are viewed as being less dependable than spirit possession, and this latter technique is used whenever other methods have failed or there is need of direct communication with the spirit world, as at major ceremonies or serious illnesses.

Raji séances involving spirit possession are probably the simplest to be found in Nepal. The *gurau* removes his hat, sits on a mat and briefly worships his tutelary deity by offering incense and *achetā*. A small lamp is placed in the plate holding the *achetā* and, if the *gurau* has his *tirsul* (trident), it is stuck into the ground beside it. The *gurau* begins chanting to call his tutelary deity and within minutes is possessed. His entire body shakes violently, his eyes are closed and his breathing becomes heavy. Although the deity may be directly questioned, frequently this does not occur and after a few minutes the deity departs from the *gurau*'s body. The shaman remains in the same place during the séance. This is said to be one of the signs of an experienced *gurau*. Less experienced *gurau* find it difficult to keep in control while possessed.

The shaman rarely washes, fasts or performs other purification rites prior to the séance, although he theoretically should do so. He frequently questions the patient before beginning divination, asking him about symptoms, how long he has been ill, or if other attempts have been made to cure him. Although the patient is normally present at a séance, he does not participate in any way. Questioning of the deity, should it occur, is done by any onlooker.

The lamp used is said to light the way for the tutelary deity as well as to frighten away evil spirits. The *gurau* calls the deity through the repetition of its name in a simple verse, and the chant is not a complicated song such as has been reported among shamans elsewhere in Nepal (Hitchcock 1974; Höfer 1974). Occasionally during a séance the shaman will throw *achetā* around himself to frighten away evil spirits.

Other deities, in addition to the tutelary deity, may possess the *gurau* during a séance, but the tutelary deity is present at least for a time. Only the experienced *gurau* is thought to be able to see the deity when it comes at the séance (cf. Eliade 1964:84). It appears like the shadow of a small man, two yards in front of the *gurau*, and enters the *gurau*'s body through his head or right hand, from there spreading through the rest of his body.

If the deity is questioned - and this is only done in Nepāli - it is always addressed as Parmesuri, a term used by the Raji for the 'supreme' deity removed from human affairs. Raji explained its use in this context as a way of showing respect to the tutelary deity of the *gurau*. The deity normally only explains what the cause of the illness is and what should be done to satisfy it. It rarely explains why an illness was caused in the first place. This ties in with the belief that deities and witches act capriciously in their attacks. Hence deities (and therefore the shaman) do not play such an important role in the maintenance of the moral order as they do in societies where they are thought to attack

when social norms have not been adhered to. There are exceptions to this, particularly when ancestor spirits or house deities attack a person, but such cases occur very infrequently.

Due to influences from Pahari shamans, the main Raji *gurau* in the Babai Valley occasionally uses boughs in his séance. A bundle of seven *sāl (Shorea robusta)* or *belauti (Aegle marmelos)* boughs are tied together and shaken while the *gurau* chants and becomes possessed. Both the *sāl* and *belauti* trees are considered to have aspects of the sacred (Crooke 1968 II:110, 112). Hitchcock (1967: 158) believes that boughs may represent the initiation tree in this context. They also appear to function in ways similar to the shaman's drum of the classical Inner Asian tradition. They are used to summon the tutelary deity, drive away evil spirits, and provide a rhythmic accompaniment to the shaman's chanting. The seven boughs is only one of many examples of the shaman's use of the mystic number seven.

In contrast to shamans in many parts of Nepal (cf. Schmid 1967: 84; Hitchcock 1969:153) the *gurau* does not have any special attire. There is nothing either in his actions or his attire which symbolizes shamanic flight or a search for a lost soul. Indeed, Raji shamans are divided in their opinions concerning the causes of illness; some saying that a spirit or witch captures the soul or a part of it, while others claim that the soul only leaves the body at death and that disease is caused primarily by spirit intrusion. The main *gurau* of the Babai Valley claimed that he would request spirits to allow the soul to return, but denied unequivocally undertaking a soul journey of any kind.

An important aspect of Raji shamanism is the complete control that the *gurau* has over the flow of information. Since he is fully aware while in a trance, he is able to explain more fully anything the deity has said, or, if the deity did not speak at all, he explains what the deity told him while he was possessed. Theoretically a person could reject the shaman's findings and call another one, but this rarely occurs. Normally his findings are accepted, and if there is doubt about them, a different means of divination may be used or a further séance held. Even if another shaman is called (as often occurs in serious cases), the second shaman's findings are usually an addition to, rather than a substitute for, the first shaman's findings. This is due to the often held belief that there are numerous causes to a serious illness and attacks may occur at different times. Thus people are not ready to accept one divinatory finding as conclusive unless the patient is soon healthy again. The situation is further complicated by a witch or spirit being able to make a shaman divine a wrong cause when using mechanical divination methods.

Contrary to the situation as found in some areas of North India (Opler 1958:554; Berreman 1964:59), in Raji society neither vic-

tims nor bystanders become possessed at a séance, or have the opportunity through possession of naming the cause of a misfortune. This must have important sociological implications, because it means that there is no satisfactory way to check the *gurau*'s findings or control the information flow. Raji shamans have few curbs on their powers as among some Indian Pahari shamans (Berreman 1964:59), where the victims become possessed and many shamans are in economic competition. It is not uncommon among Pahari shamans for a dissatisfied client to reject the shaman's findings and call on someone else.

Raji divination methods appear to conform to the general view of divination as establishing a consensus to undertake a certain action, while letting the responsibility for the decision fall upon supernatural beings (Park 1967:240). Divination enables people to feel they can cope with events, helping to reduce anxiety (Jahoda 1970:134). The unknown agents of affliction are made 'visible' by being named (Turner 1961:21). Indeed, the methods of divination, particularly the holding of a séance, may in themselves aid the curing of a patient, a point I shall return to later.

Curing Rituals and Witchcraft

Upon completion of divination, action must be taken, particularly if the illness (or other type of misfortune) is considered to have unnatural causes.[9] This may or may not involve the *gurau*; it depends on his findings. If certain village or house deities are held responsible, *pūjā* (acts of worship) may be conducted without the *gurau*'s participation. But as a rule other spirits and/or witches are at fault, and in such cases the *gurau* quite frequently makes the offerings himself. These are considered necessary in order to please the agencies responsible for the illnesses. However, they are not certain of inducing a cessation of the attacks, or even if the attacks cease, the patient's body may be too 'damaged' for the person to recover. The Raji believe that spirit exorcism does not make the patient well; it simply ensures them that he will be left alone.

Offerings are generally quite simple and often involve only *achetā*, a piece of cloth, incense, fire, a special liquid and an animal to be sacrificed. Since these offerings are made in a similar manner elsewhere in Nepal, they will not be reiterated here. A large offering may be postponed if a special promise is made. The promise-giving ceremony is very similar to that of the Magar as described by Hitchcock (1966:30) and will also not be dealt with here.

The *gurau* may resort to curing methods which do not involve the use of formal offerings to deities and spirits. For minor pains

he may simply say a spell and perhaps blow ashes on a patient. Amulets are rarely used, except in the case of children. A small coloured stone or a written *mantra* may be hung around a child's neck to protect it from evil spirits, after a simple curing ritual has been conducted. Although a number of medicinal herbs are used in curing illnesses, they are rarely employed by the *gurau*, who feels his work lies in the use of spells. *Gurau* often restrict what a patient may eat or drink, but these practices vary considerably from one shaman to the next.

One of the most common yet distinctive offerings made is that for a witch. These rituals only take place at night and normally require the *gurau*'s presence. They are considered to entail some risk of attack by the witch, and few Raji care to participate.

Prior to the offering, the *gurau* performs rites which aid in transferring the disease causing agency out of the patient into some of the objects used in the offering itself. Part of a termite's 'nest' and part of a jungle plant (*Phoenix* sp.) are tied seven times with thread and placed between the *gurau* and the patient. The shaman holds a chicken in one arm and either seven boughs (as described for the séance) or seven pieces of a broom in his other hand. He then says a *mantra*, at the completion of which he blows toward the patient. At the same time he whisks the area of the patient's body where the pain is located with the boughs or broom. The whisking is continued down on to the objects to be offered and the process is repeated for several minutes.

This procedure is referred to as *jhār-phuk* (literally, 'cause to descend' - 'blow', cf. Macdonald 1968:67, n.3). *Jhār-phuk* is often used on its own as a way to cure a patient. In such cases the ground or fire may be touched with the broom and no objects offered.

After *jhār-phuk* has been completed, the *gurau* takes *achetā* which has been wetted and passes it three times (ideally) over the patient's head and lets the water drip onto the offerings. The chicken is released until it shakes its head, indicating its willingness to be sacrificed. The objects are then circled over the head of the patient from right to left.

The *gurau* and an assistant take these and other objects to a path (not necessarily at a crossroads) leading away from the village.[10] The termite's nest and plant are placed farthest from the village, while a human figure of clay, a black cloth and a leaf plate containing other objects are arranged behind them. The leaf plate usually contains hulled rice, broken egg shells and bracelets, a few coins, female hair, a small lamp, and two balls of ashes each with a chicken feather stuck in it. Vermillion powder is used to put markings on the offerings, incense is offered, the lamp lit and a small hole dug. The *gurau* holds the

chicken behind his back as he leans over and cuts off its head with a bill-hook, which is held in place between his feet. A spell is said as this takes place and the chicken's head is buried in the hole. At the completion of the ritual the chicken's body is carried by the *gurau* as he backs away from the site, making seven zigzag movements with water and a cutting motion with his bill-hook. No one from the patient's family is allowed to eat the chicken sacrificed.

In reviewing the ritual, one is struck by the similarities between it and rituals for deities. As Dumont and Pocock (1959: 27) have noted, when going from 'good-sacred' to 'bad-sacred', some things remain identical (corresponding to 'sacred') while some things become reversed ('good' and 'bad'). Here clearly many elements serve to express the evil associated with witchcraft.

Although ideally the *gurau* should attempt to purify himself before making offerings to most deities and spirits, in the case of the witch ritual this is considered inappropriate. Likewise the site where offerings are placed should not be purified. There is no belief that the disease will be passed on to someone who walks by or touches the objects deposited on the path (cf. Abbott 1932:155); however, the offering must be made away from the house so that the witch is not tempted to attack someone else.

The objects bound with thread are supposedly eaten by the witch (or her familiar). Both of these items seem to be offered precisely because they are considered repulsive foods. The thread and spell serve to capture the witch, at least long enough for the *gurau* to escape.

The objects are circled over the patient's head as another means of transferring the disease causing agency out of his body into the objects. The circling is done right to left, the opposite of the normal way, perhaps as a means of averting evil (Abbott 1932:163). The balls of ashes are also thought to be eaten by the witch, although as others have pointed out (see Abbott 1932:179) ashes are often used in rituals to dispel evil. The chicken feathers are said to be used by the witch to clean her ears, a common practice among the Raji, although one is tempted to interpret them as symbolic substitutes for a live chicken, as occasionally no chicken is sacrificed. In any event the broken bracelets and egg shells are intended as substitutes for the real things, although again their use may have originally been tied to a belief in the ability of broken objects to avert evil (Abbott 1932:170). Female hair is thought to be woven by the witch into her own hair. The leaf plate is made with leaves which have been turned opposite to the usual manner in which such plates are constructed. Black cloth is used, because in ritual contexts the colour black is associated with evil and thus the witch's favourite colour. The cloth represents an offering of clothing to the witch.

The *gurau* explained the peculiar way in which the chicken is sacrificed as necessary for him to avoid looking at the witch (or its familiar) when it comes. It is interesting that among the Tharu, who share many features with Raji shamanism, this procedure is a way of showing disrespect to the witch, a practice which parallels the custom of other tribes of India (Archer 1947:173-174).

The chicken's head is buried as another means of capturing the witch, while the zigzag lines of water and the cutting motion with the bill-hook serve to provide a symbolic barrier to the witch's return to the village. The human figure is said to represent the witch or the witch's *chaurā* (familiar).

When speaking of the witch coming to the ritual, informants were quick to point out that it was the witch's *chāyā* (shadow-soul) which actually came and took the 'essence' of the objects. There was, however, some disagreement on this point, as some Raji feel that a person's soul, including even that of a witch, cannot leave its body. They interpreted the offerings as being made for the witch's *chaurā*. This is perceived not as an animal, but as a helping spirit, which parallels exactly the tutelary deity of the shaman and is even referred to by the same name, *agwāni*.

Obviously the basic themes underlying the ritual are the transference of the disease causing agency (perceived as a spirit or an invisible substance), the satisfying of the witch's desires through offerings, and the prevention of continued or future attacks. One might think that a witch would be offended by the types of offerings made and the way in which they are given, but precisely because she is a witch, a disgusting individual personifying evil, she is perceived by the Raji as enjoying the ritual and objects offered. The reversal of normal ritual practice is shown in numerous ways: night vs. day, impurity vs. purity, and broken vs. unbroken. To the Raji these are symbolic of the evil associated with witchcraft. The world of the witch is one of decay where order is reduced to chaos. Thus, because some elements of this world remain similar to that found in normal Raji society, it consists not of an inverted structure but rather an anti-structure (see Turner 1967:125).

In speaking of witches, I have referred to them as feminine. Although male witches *(boksa)* are thought to exist, they are very rare and none are thought to be present in the Babai Valley. A female witch is called *boksi* or occasionally *ḍāini*. The latter term has come to be used primarily to denote the spirit of a dead witch (cf. Macdonald 1968:64).

The basic witchcraft belief is that certain people in the Raji tribe are particularly evil and make use of magic to secretly harm others in the society without justifiable cause.[11] Normally, only married women are thought to have mastered witchcraft. Simi-

lar to men who have become *gurau*, *boksi* learn of their own free will. Witches are not initiated, but like the *gurau*, their power resides in the spells they have learned. *Boksi* are capable of becoming possessed, but they never do this in public as it would be proof of their witchcraft. They also worship their deities and perform special worship of their *chaurā* at Dasai, just as the *gurau* worship their tutelary deities at this time.

When speaking of witches in general, the Raji tend to refer to their incredible powers, but when referring to a suspected witch in the community they usually say she is not as powerful or evil as witches generally. Even then, witches are thought to be more powerful than shamans, hence, the main emphasis in curing rituals is to appease the witch rather than to antagonize or enter into conflict with it.

In the Babai Valley roughly sixty per cent of the married women are suspected of having knowledge of spells, but only fifteen per cent are considered powerful witches. Opinions vary considerably as to just who could be classified as a witch, and there was general agreement in only two cases. Witches are said to have characteristics which give them away. If a woman is ill-tempered, sullen and argumentative, then she may be suspected of being a witch. A problem of identification is that a witch might be clever and appear to be a friendly person.

Witches are thought to gather at isolated spots in the forest at night to dance either naked or wearing suits of iron with their hair hanging loose. There they teach one another spells and discuss the harm they bring to people. Lights seen in the forest at night are often attributed to the movements of witches.

Informants estimated that about forty per cent of all diseases are due to witches, forty per cent to deities and spirits, and twenty per cent due to natural causes. This breakdown is very artificial, because many diseases are caused both by witches and spirits (or spirits sent by witches). In one serious case over a dozen deities, spirits and witches were thought to be responsible. However, the breakdown sheds light on Raji beliefs and expectations regarding causes of disease and conforms closely to my own data.

Witches have several methods of causing illness. Contrary to the situation among the Pahari, Raji witches rarely cause other types of misfortune, such as attacking livestock. Normally, a witch simply uses spells to cause an evil spirit to attack someone. Although rare, the witch may also make use of the victim's own possessions and exuviae like a piece of his clothing, hair or fingernails. These items may be taken by the witch's *chaurā* or obtained in some other way. The witch sends the object back with a spell or places it in the victim's food. Having been swallowed,

any one of several creatures will form in the victim's body, such as a frog, a lizard, a leech, a turtle or a snake. The latter two are particularly common.

The cure for this is of some interest, as it is considered to involve the *gurau* in his most dangerous curing ritual. He takes more precautions than usual, placing ashes on his arms, legs, shoulders, chest, back and forehead. Ashes serve here to dispel evil spirits. He also purifies himself by washing and drinking *chokho* (ritually pure) water in which a piece of gold has been dipped. He sticks a knife (upon which he has spoken a spell) into the ground between himself and the door and throws *achetā* around it. Liquor or *chokho* water is sprinkled seven times around the area in which he is to work.

Moving to the patient (who lies on his back during the ritual), the *gurau* draws a circle with ashes and has it form a spiral leading to the centre of the area of pain. After speaking and blowing a *mantra* on this spot, he sucks at the centre of the circle. This takes place for a few seconds and he then spits into a bowl of water. The process is repeated several times, and the bowl is examined. The piece of cloth, or other object, is found in the bowl, and the ritual is essentially completed. Often the *gurau* takes other measures, such as making a cutting motion through a container of water and giving it to the patient to drink. These acts are thought to help cut the creature in the patient's body.

This treatment must take place indoors in order to avoid the attacks of witches and evil spirits. Any evil force will be 'cut' by the knife and dissipated into the ground. The *achetā* serves both as an offering to the *gurau*'s tutelary deity (which he calls at this time to give him strength) and to frighten away evil spirits. Most of the other actions are self-explanatory. Interestingly, due to influences from the more sceptical Pahari among whom he works, the main *gurau* in the Babai Valley performs this ritual in the morning in order to allay any doubts as to his using any trickery. That the ritual is considered the most dangerous for the *gurau* is due primarily to his taking the disease causing objects into his own body, a situation fraught with opportunity for spiritual injury.

Another method used by the witch requires the same curing ritual as described above. It involves shooting a small figure, with a miniature bow and arrow, representing the victim, followed by its symbolic cremation.

Occasionally the witch will bury an object obtained from a victim after saying a spell upon it. A 'doll' *(putla)* is formed within the victim's stomach which eats the food swallowed by him until he becomes weak and dies. The cure requires the return of the object. Water is first strained through a piece of cloth

into a *loṭā* (brass water container). After a leaf is tied over the mouth of the *loṭā*, a small hole is poked into its centre. A piece of cloth from the victim's clothing, a piece of his hair and some of his fingernail clippings are put in a leaf packet which is placed under the *loṭā*. The *gurau* then makes a libation for the *gurau*'s tutelary deity and the witch. A thread is hung from above the *lotā* with one end put into the hole in the leaf. The *gurau* slides his fingers up and down the thread speaking a *mantra* as he does so. After a few minutes, the *gurau* unties the leaf and the water is poured out of the *loṭā* into a shallow bowl where it is examined. An item similar to one of those placed in the leaf packet is found, and the *gurau* completes the ritual by performing *jhār-phuk*, whisking from the patient to the bowl. The *gurau* explained that the item buried by the witch is brought back along the thread and into the *loṭā*. The objects are placed under the *lotā* to attract the bewitched item. Finally anything harmful remaining in the victim is removed through *jhār-phuk*.

The witch may also bewitch seeds from various plants (in particular, rice and *Imperata cylindria*) and throw or blow them in the direction of the victim. These are thought to enter his body and cause illness. Although other techniques used by the witch could be mentioned here, they occur rarely, and those described above should serve to give some idea of the way witchcraft is brought about and cured.

Contrary to the situation found among many tribes in North India (cf. Berreman 1963:119) the Raji have little fear of the evil eye. Only one case of it occurred in a year's period and the cure involved only a simple use of *jhār-phuk*. However, several practices for which the Raji had no clear explanation might originally have developed in order to avoid the evil eye. Many of the drawings made on houses at Dasaĩ - a time when witches are thought to be especially active - are said only to serve as decorations, but these same signs occur in religious contexts. Abbott (1932:131-147) noted that the drawings of crosses in boxes abd handprints - all found on Raji houses - serve as a protection against the evil eye in many parts of India.

One of the difficulties in studying witchcraft among the Raji is that people, particularly women, are afraid to speak openly about it. Public accusations do not occur and suspicions are rarely voiced even among close friends. The shaman is theoretically incapable of identifying a witch, although he may tell a witch's identity to a close confidant in unusual circumstances. The main Babai Valley *gurau* told me he was afraid to identify witches because not only would they attack him but they might also take him to court. If he cannot prove the witch's guilt, he could be fined. This fear of government action is understandable because laws in this regard have existed for more than one hundred years (see Macdonald in this volume). Indeed enforcement of the law may

be one reason why public accusations of witchcraft appear to be less frequent now than in the distant past. Generally informants thought that the only way to deal with a witch was to avoid her, or, if this was not possible, then to attempt to keep on good terms with her.[12]

Without accusations, it is impossible to examine the exact kinship relations existing between victim and witch, although the Raji feel that witchcraft only rarely occurred between close relatives, including co-wives and wives of brothers in a joint family.[13]

It might prove of interest at this point to briefly examine reasons underlying the *gurau*'s successes and failures, particularly in relation to the curing of illness. A sick person invariably felt immediate relief after a curing session with a shaman.[14] However, if his condition does not noticeably improve within a few days, the Raji have a variety of reasons as to why the ritual is ineffective. A process of 'secondary elaboration' takes place where other beliefs are used to explain discrepancies so that there is no challenge to the basic theoretical assumptions of the system (see Horton 1970:357). Thus rather than conclude from failures that the shaman might be faking and/or that the supernatural beings might not exist, the Raji find reasons for failure that serve in effect to uphold the belief system. Probably the most common excuse is that other spirits or witches have begun to attack the patient since the last séance and curing ritual was held. Also a disease-causing agency, especially a witch, may continue bothering the patient even after offerings have been made. Spirits and witches may cause the diagnosis to be incomplete or incorrect. The patient's body also may have been too 'damaged' to get well again. Only rarely is it believed that the *gurau* made a mistake, and then only in mechanical divination. Normally a diagnosis is considered correct as it stands. This, of course, helps to solidify the position of the shaman, as it is felt that at least he was able to discover some of the cause of the illness. Some informants felt that the *gurau* might not try hard enough to cure someone in serious cases out of fear. Only a few informants suspected that the 'big' *gurau* simply did not know enough to cure diseases, although this is a respectable excuse if it is thought that spirits of another caste or tribe are attacking a person. Thus it is not surprising that considerable anxiety arises in cases of serious illnesses, even though there is generally a deep faith in the shaman's ability.

Public Rituals

In addition to dealing with illnesses as they occur, the 'big' *gurau* must also participate in certain public rituals which take place regularly throughout the year. It will only be possible

here to briefly touch upon these rituals and the shaman's role in them. However, in the eyes of some Raji they rank among the more important aspects of the shaman's work.

In the Babai Valley *pūjā* are conducted for the village deities twice a year, once prior to rice planting in May-June and once following the rice harvest in November-December. The first ceremony is called Dhuria and takes place at the village *thān*. Each household sends one representative along with offerings, consisting usually of one or more chickens. While the village priest makes the sacrifices, the *gurau* begins his work in the centre of the *thān*. After making offerings to his tutelary deity, he takes a wooden peg and becomes possessed for a brief period. He slaps the ground and the deity immediately leaves his body. Assistants pound the peg into a *sāl (Shorea robusta)* tree located near the *thān*. The procedure is then repeated with several pegs, which are pounded such as to form two equal rows, and wrapped seven times with thread.

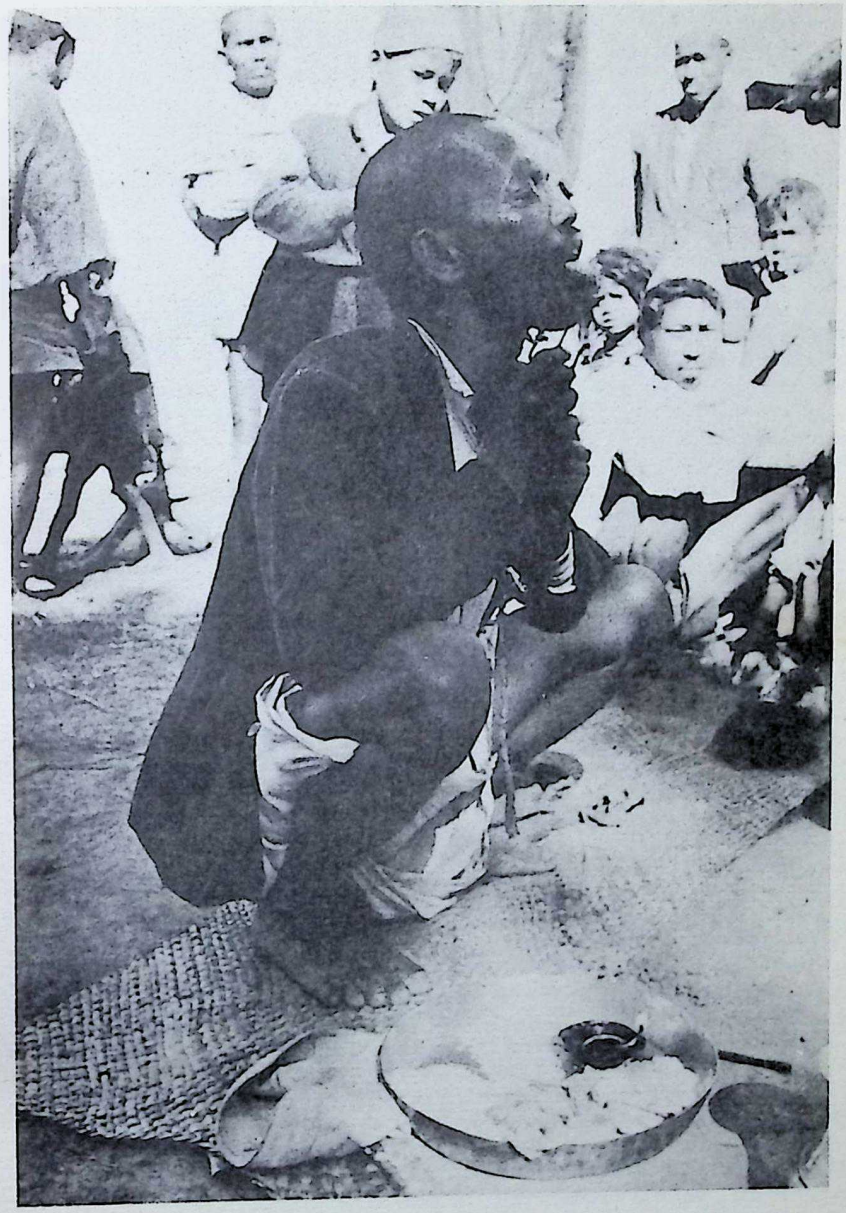
The *gurau* next digs a small hole in the centre of a purified area in front of him and wraps an egg seven times length- and widthwise. Vermilion powder and black collyrium are placed on it as a spell is spoken, and it is put into the hole. Milk is poured over the egg, after which it is covered with dirt.

Taking his sharpened *tirsul* (trident), the *gurau* says a spell and sticks it through his tongue. After removing the trident, he sacrifices a chicken for his tutelary deity. He may also at this time become possessed in order to see if the deities are satisfied with the ritual. At the completion of the *pūjā* he gives each household representative four wooden pegs (not from the tree), one piece of iron, and some *achetā*.

The second *pūjā* is called Lawangi and takes place at one of the major threshing places. The ritual is conducted much as described above with the exception that there is no rite involving the use of pegs.

Bhuyar is a collective term used by the Raji to refer to all village deities (although a few Raji also perceive Bhuyar as a deity itself).[15] These ceremonies are primarily concerned with the fertility of crops and the prevention of misfortunes the village deities might cause.

The *gurau* is actually the key person in the ceremony even though he does not perform the sacrifices himself. He is the one who makes the basic decision as to when the ceremonies should take place. In the Dhuria ceremony he captures evil spirits of the area in the pegs. He becomes possessed by his tutelary deity in order to have the strength necessary for such a task, causing him to hit the ground. The wood used *(Smilax lanceaefoba)* is said to



Penetrating the tongue of a Raji *gurau* with a *tirsul* at the Bhuĩyar *pujā*

be especially effective in keeping the spirits captured. The number of pegs employed varies because the *gurau* claimed he could capture as many spirits in a single peg as was necessary. The encirclement of the pegs serves as a further insurance that the spirits do not escape.

Each house representative receives four pegs to drive into the ground at four corners of the house along with a few pieces of *achetā*. The piece of iron is driven into the threshold. A spell has been said upon all of these articles and together they serve as protection against the intrusion of evil spirits.

The egg offering is made for the deity Baghesheri. It is the tiger goddess, and figures prominently in Raji ritual because tigers still kill cattle in this area. The loss of only one ox could spell the ruin of some Raji families. It is thought that Baghesheri should be kept from causing harm and thus is captured into the egg. The markings serve as inducements to the deity, while the threads help hold it captured, as does burying it in the centre of a purified place.

Sticking a *tirsul* through the tongue is viewed as a special, and powerful, type of human blood offering. The main *gurau* of the Babai Valley offers it to his tutelary deity, Kālikā, on important occasions in order to get its aid in making the rituals effective. Interestingly, the blood offering is made to the consort of Shiva, Kālikā, and the *tirsul* is a sacred object traditionally associated with Shiva in Hinduism. However the Raji do not recognize either of these associations. The *tirsul* itself consists not only of the three points (three being a mystic number) but also has three pieces of iron attached to both sides of it to aid in repelling evil spirits. It is kept wrapped in red and white strips of cloth meant as offerings to the tutelary deity.

Another type of human blood offering should be mentioned, as it is said to be offered to Baghesheri if tigers cause a serious loss of cattle. In some areas shamans may even give this as an offering at a Bhuyar *pūjā*. It is said to involve the spitting out of blood from the heart, which is obtained with the help of a *mantra*.

The *gurau* is also called upon regularly to rid villages of troublesome spirits in a ritual called Nikasi (from *nikāsnu*, to take or put out). This ritual involves the use of clay figures representing a royal procession, complete with horses, elephants, and carts. They are placed on a path leading away from the village, and the usual offerings are made. Instead of killing a chicken, it is let loose. One Nikasi, performed when insects attack a rice crop, is slightly different in that a few of the insects are placed along with the other offerings.

The animals and carts are thought to serve as vehicles to transport the deities causing misfortune out of the village. In the same way the chicken appears to be used as a scapegoat to take the illnesses out of the village with it (Crooke 1968 I:169). However, Raji informants interpreted this as simply a distinct way of making an offering. In order to make these rituals more effective, the *gurau* may offer blood from his tongue.

A ritual called Dharbandi (literally, edge-binding) is conducted once a year in March-April. It is done in order to 'bind' the village from evil spirits. The *gurau* and his assistants go to four locations forming a rough circle around the village. At each spot, beginning with one to the east of the village, *sāl* saplings are stuck into the ground. They are thought to serve as sentinels to guard the village. Sugar mixed with water and leaves *(Azidirachta indica)* mixed with clarified butter or water are poured into a bamboo container which is hung along with strips of red or white cloth (depending on the deity of the direction involved) on to the top of the *sāl* tree. A miniature figure of a horse and water trough are placed at its base, and offerings of incense and liquor are made. A wooden stake *(Acacia catechu)* is pounded into the ground by the *gurau* after a spell has been spoken upon it. This same procedure is repeated at the other locations. During this time no one present may return to the village, lest an opening in the protective circle be formed. The idea here is that spirits will be attracted to the offerings and to the good smelling peg, which will then hinder them from proceeding further.

The *gurau* also participates in elaborate wedding ceremonies. In this case he helps in the 'binding' of the deities and spirits of the area. The shaman, village priest, household representative and assistants to the groom gather at the groom's house. (The same ritual is also performed at the house of the bride). After making libations to their respective house deities, a water-filled *kalso* (ceremonial water jar) is set on top of a basket containing hulled rice. A leaf is tied over the mouth of the jar and a lamp placed upon it.

The *mangliārni*, a female singer at the wedding, sings a verse in which a deity is called to be 'bound'. On completion of the verse a single rope loop is made over the neck of the jar and the participants throw *achetā* on it. The household representative, the *gurau*, and the village priest have the responsibility of naming the deities and spirits with which they are familiar.[16] In this way no deities of the area will be overlooked, with the single exception of Jagarnathi, a deity which is not bound because it is called in times of emergency. Only after all the spirits have been bound can the ceremony begin in earnest. On completion of the wedding the men again gather together, this time to free the spirits. This involves a procedure similar to that described above, except, after a verse is sung in which the deity is told

it is free, the loop is undone. This ritual is felt to be important at large weddings because deities and spirits, especially house deities of the bride and groom, are thought to become angered at the disturbance caused by the crowd of people and the intrusion of women into area in which most of the deities and ancestors are worshipped. The marriage ceremony is the only life cycle event in which the *gurau* actively participates in his role as shaman. Even his own funeral is conducted in the same way as for other Raji.

The rituals described above give some indication of the *gurau*'s responsibilities and of his importance to the community. Of course, there are numerous other events when the *gurau* is needed, e.g. at the opening of an irrigation canal (to see if the water spirits are satisfied with the offerings), the establishment of a new place of worship for the village, and so on. In short, any time that direct communication with the spirit world is considered important for the community, a *gurau* is called upon.

Obviously, Raji shamanism shares several features with shamanism elsewhere in Nepal and India. It has been particularly influenced, if not largely based upon, Tharu shamanism. The Tharu were the first settled people with whom the Raji had contact after they gave up their nomadic life.

The fact that not a single religious term or spell occurs in shamanistic contexts in the Raji language points to the extensive acculturation which has taken place. The majority of supernatural beings, curing methods and festivals appear to be closely patterned on those found among the Tharu. Recently, as Pahari from the hills have settled in the Babai Valley, Raji culture has been increasingly influenced by these Hindu agriculturalists. This is evident not only in such obvious items as clothing and material goods, but also in such shamanistic practices as the use of boughs in séances and the increase in the number of Pahari deities thought to cause illnesses.[17]

Because the will of the gods is expressed through him, the shaman can play an important role in acculturation situations (see Berreman 1964:58). New deities, and forms of worship for these deities, can be incorporated with little opposition from others. This is precisely what is happening in Raji society, and one would expect numerous changes to occur in the coming years. However, it does not appear that they will conflict with beliefs and customs of the Raji, but rather will be additions to them. Although normally devoid of any significant economic or political power, because of his key role in the traditional religious life of his people and his role in helping them adapt to increasing Pahari contact, the *gurau* for some time is likely to remain one of the most important individuals in Raji society.

Johan Reinhard

1. The research upon which this article is based was supported by grants from the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research and the Austrian Academy of Sciences. To both of these organizations I would like to express my sincere gratitude. I would also like to thank John Hitchcock for his comments on the paper.

   Tape recordings of various shamanistic activities have been deposited at the Phonogram Archive of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, and 16 mm. movie films of these activities will soon be available from the Institute for Scientific Film, Goettingen.

2. See reports on the Raji of Almora by, among others, Tiwari (1953), Traill (1828:160-209), Sherring (1906:10-20), and Atkinson (1884:365-368). One group, the Raute, has been examined in an article I have written which is soon to appear (Reinhard n.d.) and by Nazhari Nath (1956). For information on the Purbia Raji see my dissertation (1973).

3. The data presented here was gathered as part of a general ethnographic study undertaken among the Raji from May 1969 to April 1970. Although I was able to observe virtually all the shamanistic practices described in this paper, the 'big' shamans lived in other villages, and therefore, I could only occasionally work directly with them. Furthermore, shamanism was not the focus of my research and many areas, particularly relating to the socio-economic aspects of the shaman's work and his day to day activities, require much further study.

   The reader should also be aware that in divorcing shamanism from the total religious complex, such as has been necessary for this paper, inevitable distortions arise. For a fuller description and analysis of shamanism and witchcraft among the Raji see my dissertation (1973).

4. I will avoid dealing with differences between these general groups, but should point out that I am referring here primarily to the Dangaura Tharu and the Pahāri twice-born Hindu castes, the Chetri and Brahman, as well as the untouchable castes. Spellings of native terms are only approximate. See my dissertation (1973:277-283) for a more precise phonemic transcription.

5. These terms are basically identical and appear derived from the common Hindi-Nepāli word *guru* (teacher). Another term used primarily when referring to the spirits of dead shamans,

and occasionally for living ones, is *guni* ('skilled, gifted'; Turner 1931:144). Essentially the same term has been found elsewhere in South Asia to designate a shaman (Elwin 1939: 338). Rahmann (1959:731) has shown the parallel between the relationship of the Hindu teacher and his pupil and that of the shaman and his apprentice among the Baiga and Santal. The same type of relationship exists among the Raji. Turner (1931:145) defines *gurau* as 'a particular kind of magician supposed to possess the power of turning himself into a tiger'. This seems to be a clear reference to Tharu shamans thought by many in West Nepal to possess this ability. The relationship of the *gurau* with fierce jungle animals such as tigers cannot be dealt with here. However, see Eliade (1964: 72, 94); cf. Crooke (1886, II:213); Elwin (1939:351).

6. This is unusual because among most tribes the initial traumatic experience precedes a formal initiation. See Eliade (1964:110).

7. Koppers (1940-41) has pointed to the historical basis for a connection between the Kāli-Durgā cult and shamanism in India.

8. See also Diehl (1956:94) and Blofeld (1970:88), who has noted that most *mantra* in Tibetan Buddhism are strings of syllables with no verbal meaning.

9. It should be noted that with rare exceptions most spirits cause numerous types of diseases. Disease types and particular spirits are not closely correlated. The exceptions are cholera and smallpox which are associated with particular goddesses.

10. The assistants of the shaman may be any male bystanders and are not necessarily knowledgeable in religious matters.

11. I realize that some anthropologists would prefer to designate this as sorcery. However, the terminological confusion here is considerable, and I will abide by the definition as given. See Turner (1967:112-127) and my dissertation (1973:8-9) for a more thorough discussion of this problem.

12. One reason women are considered to be witches rather than men, hence the traitors in Raji society, may be that in patrilineal-virilocal societies women come from outside the group. They may therefore be viewed as divisive factors in terms of the solidarity of the agnatically related core of men (Epstein 1967:150).

13. Most analyses of witchcraft are based on the study of accusations, which are thought to point to areas of tension

in certain kinship categories (Marwick 1970). Turner (1967: 114-116) has rightly criticized such studies as being too limited. Witch beliefs are not solely the product of social tensions and conflicts, but among other things are attempts to explain and control the inexplicable in societies with limited capacities to cope with a hostile environment. As we have seen, witchcraft is considered widespread in Raji society, yet accusations do not occur. More than just a fear of being attacked by the witch or fined seem to be at play here. If a Raji made a public accusation of witchcraft without positive proof of the person's guilt, he would create major conflict in the society. For not only is Raji society so small in numbers and close-knit that a significant part of one's social community would cease to be open to the accuser (and thus also cease being a possible source of support in the future), but even neutral parties would turn against the accuser in such a case, because he would be ignoring standards of good social behaviour. The lack of accusations and certainty of the witch's identity in any particular case - or even of witchcraft as being the sole or primary cause of a misfortune - diffuses hostility throughout the society, while at the same time contributes something towards social cohesion by using the abstract model of a witch as personifying wrong behaviour (Mair 1969: 201). Hence, the argument that witchcraft beliefs exist to resolve social tensions through accusations appears to put the cart before the horse and confuses possible latent functions with causative factors.

14. Many tend to view this as being due to the psycho-therapeutic effects of the shaman's actions, particularly relating to illnesses based on psychological disorders (see Kiev 1972). I think it would be a mistake to place much emphasis on this aspect among the Raji, especially in regard to the ultimate curing of an illness of pathogenic origin as opposed to brief relief from pain. For an interesting view that modern psychiatry represents a limited and imperfect form of shamanism, see Lewis (1971:198-199).

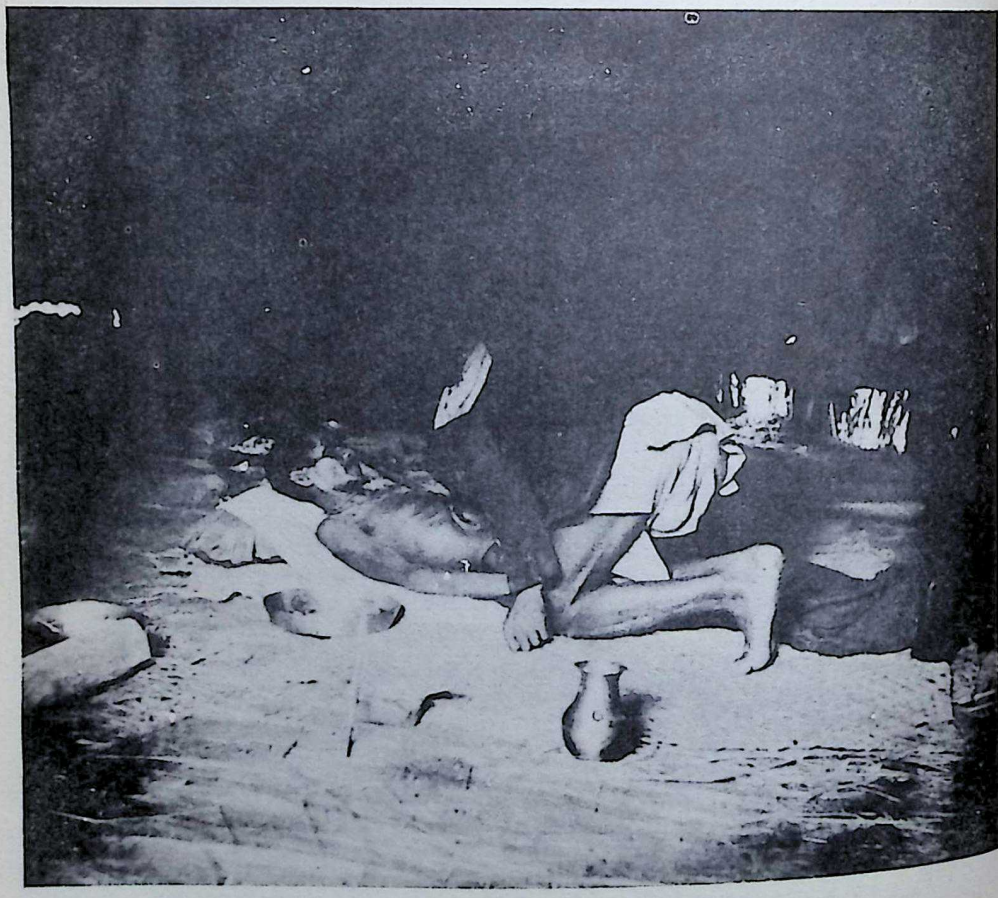
It might also be noted here that Raji shamans can hardly be considered to have severe psychological problems, such as some authors (Ohlmarks 1939; Silverman 1967) attribute to shamans generally. Even trance induction techniques, e.g. rapid breathing and rhythmic chanting, are less intensive than those I have observed among other castes and tribes, and appear to be too routine and brief to bring about serious sensory deprivation. Drugs are not used at all and liquor is rarely consumed in large quantities prior to séances. However, even though one might conclude that some of the occasions on which a *gurau* becomes possessed may be simulated, there is no doubt in my mind that the reality

of such a phenomenon and of supernatural beings and witches is seldom questioned by either the shamans or others in the society.

15. Bhuyar appears to be a derivative of *bhuĩ* (ground) and is commonly found in Nepal to designate a deity of the soil (see Macdonald 1969:73; Bista 1967:114).

16. Brahman do not in any way play a religious role in Raji society.

17. Contrary to some Pahari and Tharu shamans, the *gurau* do not perform as fortune-tellers or astrologists, nor do they find lost objects. It is possible that with increased acculturation they may learn to perform them in the future.



The sucking of a disease-causing object by a Raji *gurau*

PART III
SPIRIT POSSESSION IN NEPAL AND ADJACENT AREAS

Jhãkri dancing around an offering of flowers and rice placed in their path by the villagers of Panaoti

XV

ENCOUNTERS WITH INTERCESSORS IN NEPAL

A comprehensive study of intercessors demands considerable time of the ethnologist, for he must thoroughly understand not only the natural and human milieu, but he must also 'cover' the vast cultural context embracing this phenomenon. He has therefore either to devote himself to the study of intercessors, or, as the remaining alternative, closely observe individual cases. Ideally, the ethnologist would live for a long time with the intercessor, then with those who depend on him and in addition, he would have a substantial medical background.

From my first contact with intercessors in Sikkim and the district of Kalimpong in 1953, to my most recent encounter with an old *dhāmi* of the upper valley of the Seti in Western Nepal, I have had numerous meetings with intercessors along the roads leading to the upper valleys of Nepal. In this article, I will not attempt to present an analysis of the facts but rather a series of remarks taken from my notebooks. This fragmentary material must ultimately be considered in a larger context, taking into account the historical dimension and the Himalayan religious structure, which has not yet been studied in detail nor synthesized.

Thus, I will successively present the Lepcha *boṅ-thiṅ*, the Magar *jhãkri* of Tatopani, the Thakali *drom*, the *dhāmi* of Chainpur-Bajhang and finally the Tibetan *lha-pa*.

The Lepcha boṅ-thiṅ of Kalimpong (August 1953)

It was in August of 1953 that I first met an intercessor in Tanyang, a Lepcha village located south of Kalimpong.[1]

The Lepchas of Tanyang adopted Tibetan Buddhism about seventy years ago, at the beginning of the 20th century, but this has by no means involved the elimination of their earlier religious traditions. The chief functionary of their indigenous beliefs is the *boṅ-thiṅ*[2] who is a kind of intercessor. He is chosen by the tutelary god *boṅ thiṅ rum* from a family where there have been *boṅ-thiṅ* for many generations, and he is initiated after a long illness which serves as a kind of preparatory phase. The occupations of the *boṅ-thiṅ* are the same as those of other villagers; he cultivates

Three *jhãkri* beating their drums before the rite of circumbulation

his fields and looks after his goats and oxen. Because of his religious position, he possesses a high social standing in the village, but he is not a member of the panchayat.

The well-intentioned divinities are called *rum* in contrast to the divinities of evil intent, the *mun*, who are the cause of disease, death and disaster. The most important of the propitious divinities is *ta-se tuk-bo-thiṅ*, also called *ta-se-thiṅ*.[3] Many of the propitious divinities take the form of female spirits *(mit)* inhabiting springs and lakes. The evil divinities, the *mun*, are innumerable, haunting forests, bogs, torrents and rocks. Being very powerful, they are liable to interfere at any time in the life of the Lepchas and obstruct their projects. Only repeated sacrifices can satisfy their greed for flesh and blood.

A double religious function devolved upon *boṅ-thiṅ* Hobu who was my informant. In the role of propitiator he had to attract the attention of the chief god *ta-se-thiṅ* and other well-intentioned divinities by means of offerings; as intercessor he had to appease and drive away the *mun* through blood sacrifices.

Periodically the *bon-thiṅ* burns incense and recites the following prayer:

> 'O great god, protect us from illness, influenza, winds of the south and lightning. Protect us from the evil which can come from those who practise magic against us.[4] You, too, king of demons, restrain your followers.'

The most important religious ceremony *(rum-fat)* takes place once a year after the harvest. The *bon-thiṅ* makes an offering to all the divinities with whom he has contact. The villagers bring rice, millet, eggs, butter and fruit of all kinds. These offerings are placed on a stone on a hill-top well in view of *kon-cen cu* (Kanchenjunga), the mountain which dominates the whole region.

The *bon-thiṅ* invokes successively the different summits of the mountain, which are identified with the following divinities: *kon-cen cu* and his wife *kon-lo cu*, *pun-dim* and *pun-zon-cu*, their son and daughter *ra-tat* and *ra-yot*, their grand-son and grand-daughter, *sin-mu* and *ko-lun-mu-cu*, their male and female servants. The offspring and the servants are the lesser summits on either side of *kon-cen cu*.

Next the *bon-thiṅ* addresses the spirits of the earth and the protectors of the village places, *tsen-gog* a mountain divinity, *ta-lyaṅ-do* divinity of the heights above the village, *so-mon-pon-di*, spirit of the hamlet of Somalbong.[5] To these divinities, whose role seems altogether rather obscure, he offers rice, millet and oranges. In the third place the *bon-thiṅ* requests the chief of the demons to restrain his followers. Of these, *tam-nok-mun* and

his partner *lyan-ser* were mentioned as the most powerful. This pair of black demons comes from the plains; having no children they are particularly self-willed and so more difficult to control than the others who are named *tsen-dut* and his mate, *tun-kun-mit*, *lun-li*, and his mate *lun-lun-mun*, dwellers in caves, rocks and streams. The *mun* receives offerings of *ci* (millet beer) and rice.

In spite of such periodical offerings and sacrifices of cocks, the *mun* still manifest themselves by causing diseases. The *boṅ-thiṅ* is called upon in these cases to identify the dissatisfied *mun*. By means of divination he determines the kind of sacrifice required by the demon. A serious illness often necessitates a sacrifice of an ox. Before killing the animal invocations are made to the demons *gie-bu-mun*, *co-gye-mun*, *tsen-dut* and *me-so-mun*, who takes the life of men. While the animal is being killed, the sick man is attached to it by means of a cord, and the beseeches the demon to accept the flesh and blood of the animal in place of the life of the man.

The animal is cut up and the parts arranged ceremonially upon a bamboo mat. Six special offerings consisting of pieces of neck and lung, some rice and millet beer, are placed on bamboo leaves as offerings for the disgruntled divinities. The *boṅ-thiṅ* begs the demons to accept them, praying that they may cease to cause illness of all kinds: headache, stomachache, pains in the limbs, etc.

Finally the *boṅ-thiṅ* has an essential function to play at the death of a man. Since the soul of a man must return to the place of its origin, it has to find its way to the ancestors *ti-kun-tik* and *ni-kun-nal* in the sacred land *rum-lyen*.[6] In order to make the soul take the right path the *boṅ-thiṅ* has at his disposal suitable spells. If a man is killed in the jungle or eaten by an animal, this causes special difficulties. Great efforts are made to retrieve his body, for if his soul has not been properly dispatched, it will hang around troubling members of the family. My informant also told me that the soul is judged by the god *co-ge pe-no (chos-royal* T.*)* and is sent either to heaven or hell.

Mention was also made of the *mun*, the feminine counterpart of the *boṅ-thiṅ*, but none is to be found now in Tanyang. The *mun* whose office passes from grandmother to granddaughter, is inspired by a tutelary divinity similar to *boṅ-thiṅ rum*. According to the Tanyang villagers, these *mun* have power over the divinities of streams and mountains. Their supernatural power is characterized by the following stories which are often told in the village:

> 'Two brothers had become enemies after quarreling about a piece of land. The younger one appealed to a *boṅ-thiṅ* in order to avenge himself on his brother. The elder one fell ill soon afterwards, and so his family called upon a

mun. By means of divination she discovered the cause of the illness. A pig had been buried in the field which was the cause of the dispute. This pig was still alive, and the *mun* ordered that it should be dug up and placed near the house of the younger brother. Four days later, he died, together with seven members of his family.'

In earlier times, the *mun* shared with the *boṅ-thiṅ* the power of guiding the souls of the dead to *rum-lyan*. Moreover, they could forestall the future and hold conversation with the dead.

'Three Lepchas went fishing. One of them left his companions and disappeared. His friends looked for him and found his corpse in the river. On returning to the village, the two men, although innocent, were accused of his death. A *mun*, who was consulted, asked the soul of the dead man how he had died. He replied that a *mun*, whom he had offended by cutting bamboos in a forbidden place, had pushed him into the water. Through the mediation of the *mun* the drowned man asked his father to release his friends and also revealed the place where his savings were hidden. The parents found in fact eleven rupees and six annas in a bamboo near the hearth. The dead man entrusted his child to his parents and requested his wife not to marry again.'[7]

The Magar jhãkri from the valley of the Kali Gandaki (August 1967)

Bhakta Bahadur, a Magar of Mahabir, runs an inn on the trail that goes along the Kali Gandaki, between Beni and Tatopani. His establishment provided me with a stop-over on the way to the land of Thak (August 19, 1967). When I arrived, tea had already been prepared and by the time I reached the covered porch - where two travellers were already resting - the monsoon rains had begun falling heavily. Inside the house, people were chatting around a hearth over which hung many framed pictures of our host in a Gurkha soldier uniform.

One of the men inquired about a neighbour whose health had taken a turn for the worse. The *jhãkri* from Sikha had been called and he 'did the ritual of *dobāṭe bhut*, driving away the evil at the crossroads, but it was all in vain'. The *jhãkri* had performed a *dobāṭę bhut* at the juncture of two trails outside the village. He had sacrificed a male goat whose head he buried with a sampling of all the seeds grown in the area, a silver coin, a piece of iron, a stone and a ploughshare *(halo)* the point turned downwards. Sacrificial blood had been poured over these offerings.

The conversation continued: 'What could have caused his illness? Perhaps the neighbour cut down bamboos in the sacred and

protected area where the divinity Garpake Baba lives? Or maybe forgot to perform the ceremony to the Kuldevatā?'

Following is the myth associated with this tutelary divinity Garpake Baba:[8]

> 'The tutelary divinity of the Magars is called Garpake Baba. His wife Raimala gave birth to nine sons and then died. Garpake Baba remarried. His second wife, Phimala, was quite beautiful and the nine sons, being envious of their father, decided to kill him in order to marry Phimala. "How can we get rid of the old man?" They thought about it for a long time. "We will go hunting with our father and when we arrive at the hunting ground, the tiger will eat him." They suggested the hunt to their father but Garpake Baba took the tiger by surprise and killed him with one arrow.
>
> 'The sons met once again to decide on another way of eliminating their father. "We will go for honey by the cliff. Father will go down to gather it and once he has descended, we will cut the rope ladder." The sons and their father left for the jungle, and arrived at the top of the cliff. Halfway down the cliff were the beehives. The father asked his sons to go down for the honey, but each of them found a pretext to refuse. The father descended alone.
>
> 'Once he had arrived near the beehive, he threw aside the empty containers and kept those that were full of honey. "Have you finished?" his sons asked. "No, not yet." The third time his sons asked this question, the father became suspicious and said to his sons: "I've finished gathering the honey." The sons cut the ropes of the ladder and returned home.
>
> 'Garpake Baba stayed on the cliff for 12 years, eating nothing but honey.
>
> 'One day, two black-feathered vultures *(garud-garudni)* finally came by the cliff. "What are you doing here?" they asked the old man. "I came here to gather honey with my nine sons, but once I had gone down the cliff, they cut the rope and left me for dead." "We will stretch our wings out together and carry you back home." Garpake Baba hesitated: "My sons will kill me, and can I trust these birds?" He said to them, "First, in order to prove your strength to me, bring a large boulder here on your wings." They carried a large boulder on their spread wings. The father thought: "Yes, these birds wish to help me." "Drop me off near the spring,

right next to the house." *Garud-garudni* carried Garpake Baba, who weighed next to nothing, since he was so dehydrated.

'His despondent wife, who wore her clothes inside out and hair hanging down (unbraided?), went to the spring for water. She was about to drink some water when Garpake Baba stirred the water with a leaf from a *ruru* tree. The woman wondered: "Who could be stirring this water?" She looked up and saw a *palcaura* bird fly away crying *chak*. She said to him, "I'm unhappy and you're stirring up my water. I hope you get trapped in a slip-knot made of an ox hair ..."; and she cast this spell on him. A second time, a *dhabini* bird troubled the water. The third time, the woman saw her husband and cried when she saw how thin he was. "You must quickly return home."

'During this time, the nine sons were practising archery. The winner was to marry his stepmother, but none of the brothers could hit the target. "I don't want to go home, my sons will kill me. But if you insist, you must bring me a large grain basket *(thun)* a bamboo stick and a white cotton veil nine cubits long." The woman put her husband in the basket, covered it with the cloth, picked up the stick and carried it all back to the house. After climbing the nine-notched ladder, she set her husband down on the upper floor.

'The nine sons continued their archery. The father saw them and thought, "I am alive after 12 years of suffering. My sons covet my wife, but none of them can hit the target. I myself will shoot the arrow." Garpake Baba took his bow, aimed carefully, and hit the target with the first arrow. Each claimed that the arrow was his own, and a quarrel broke out. But the youngest son thought, "Only my father with his strength and skill is capable of hitting the target. He's alive!"

'Garpake Baba cast a spell and transformed six of his sons into jungle animals. The three sons who had taken pity on their father were spared; the eldest *jeṭho*, the second *māilo*, and the youngest *kāncho*. The eldest son must sacrifice a rooster, the second must sacrifice *kodo* (Eleusine?) on the threshing-floor near the house, the third must offer a white ram whose meat is to be distributed among the members of the lineage ...'[9]

Bhakta Bahadur describes the ceremony to the Kuldevatā as follows. It is a re-enactment of the myth we have just summarized.

'The *kul pūjā* is performed every year or every three years,

depending on the wealth of the head of the household and the presence of all the members of the family. The *pūjā* must be performed every three years in the month of Jeṭh or Mangsir. There may be no deaths in the family during the 13 days preceding the ceremony.

'The house is thoroughly cleaned, the walls and floor are smeared with clay and the lower parts of the walls are covered with ochre. The participants wash themselves and all their clothing.

'Three virgin boys, called *panre*, members of the lineage of the head of the household, are appointed to execute the ritual. The youngest of the three has the main role.

'The three *panre* construct an altar near the house with four stones, two placed vertically, and a third placed (horizontally?) on top. A bamboo hut with a straw mat roof is built above this altar.

'The head of the family prepares the ritual objects:

1) *ḍalo*, a small, 4-legged basket where grain or woollen yarn is usually kept;
2) *thun*, a large, tightly-woven wicker basket (used for grain);
3) *parāl*, a stalk of rice (symbolizing the rope ladder);
4) a branch of the *tibri* tree;
5) a leaf from the *ruru* bush;
6) a bamboo stick;
7) a slip-knot of ox hair;
8) a nine-notched stick (the extract of the tree is *ponia*);
9) a rupee coin;
10) nine *muri* of corn or barley;
11) three *muri* of husked rice.

'This is all placed near the altar. A white ram is chosen for the sacrifice.

'At night, when everyone is asleep, the three *panre* make a fire near the altar, kill a cock whose blood is poured into the fire, then prepare, cook, and eat three *mānā* of rice and the meat of the cock.

'Toward three in the morning, they fetch the whole ram attached to the central pillar of the house, kill it before the altar, and cut it into pieces.

'In the morning, the family members gather in the presence of the *jhãkri* called for the occasion. The latter takes his place near the altar, stretches out the ram skin and places on it the head, feet and tail of the ram. The *jhãkri* then invokes the tutelary divinity of the lineage. He goes into a trance and the divinity speaks through his mouth: he describes what the *panre* did improperly during the ritual of the previous night, names the people present who have not been purified ... The *jhãkri* thus expresses the wishes of the Kuldevatā.

'The *jhãkri*, the three *panre* and the woman who prepared the ceremonial beer dance around the altar to the beating of a drum.

'The eldest *panre* then places all the objects of the cult in the *ḍālo*: the nine *mānā* of corn, in a plate; three *mānā* of rice; a rupee coin; a bamboo stick. The oil lamp is carefully set on the plate of rice. Then, the *ḍālo* is put in the *thun* basket, and a piece of white cotton nine cubits long covers everything.

'The second *panre* carries the *thun* from the altar to the house and places it on the shelf above the hearth. The *jhãkri* then enters the house, beating his drum.

'The oil lamp must burn during the night following this ceremony.

'According to the *jhãkri*'s instructions, the head of the household promises to perform the ceremony to the Kuldevatā within the following three years.

''Then begin the chants and dances involving not only the members of the lineage but also the relatives by marriage and the villagers.'

The Thakali drom (August-September, 1967 and 1969)

In Thakali country, the all-powerful intercessor was until recently the *drom*. Although a tendency towards 'Hinduization' makes it rather difficult to grasp the Thakali religious beliefs in their entirety, the importance of the *drom* in the life of the community cannot be questioned. Whereas they are few in number today, there were two or three in each village about 30 years ago.[10]

The *drom* presides at the ritual dedicated to the clan's ancestors and at the festival of the four clans that takes place once every 12 years.[11] He intervenes to drive away evil and assists the souls of the dead in their departure for the other world.

Formerly, according to the *drom* of Khanti, the *drom* (pl.) had very long hair that was braided like a turban on their heads.

We will not describe the ceremonies to the tutelary divinities with which the *drom* is closely associated. Whether they seek to avert evil forces in the case of sickness or epizooty, or propitiate the ancestors, the ritual and sacrifice take place in the same way. A healthy, white male goat is chosen. They purify it by pouring water on three hot white stones, and kill it by removing its heart. The blood is poured on the sacrificial cakes representing the divinities to be invoked. The animal is cut into pieces, the meat is immediately prepared and eaten by the members of the family or clan.

In the case of sickness, often caused by an evil spirit *(no pa)* the *drom* performs a divination ceremony with grains of rice or prayer beads. He then decides on the appropriate sacrificial offerings, makes two effigies (male and female) and nine sacrificial cakes. The demon may appear and indicate to the *drom* the food he wants. Wearing a turban and the prayer beads *(mālā)* (N), around his neck,[12] he beats the drum. Attached to the beads are small replicas of blacksmith tools. In a plate made of leaves, the *drom* places a little rice, barley, pepper, beer, meat, a potato, and inserts rooster feathers into three small balls of ash. After turning the plate around the patient three times, he puts it down at the entrance to the village. Three stones, one on top of the other *(to-bo)*, with a leaf of nettle under the first, are placed nearby.

Before leaving on a trip, a traveller may call upon the *drom* for protection. The *drom* takes an egg, a branch of juniper, a red and white cotton band, and a piece of birch bark in which he places the egg, and holds all this above the traveller's head while he recites an incantation. Then he leaves the village, puts the egg in an elevated place and ties the red and white bands to a tree in the forest.

Possession is apparently a rather common phenomenon among the Thakali and the *drom* is frequently consulted to drive away evil. When a sorceress *(pu-mi-sha)* casts a spell, the *drom* applies an iron blade *(panyo)* (N) to the cheek of the possessed person. The mark then appears on the cheek of the sorceress. The *drom* questions the possessed person. It is the sorceress who answers, and she is made to reveal her identity and explain the reasons for her initiation and malediction.

When a man dies, the *drom* is summoned to help the soul make its way to the other world.

On a shelf in the house, they have placed:

1) seven piles of sorgho *(junāli makai)* (N) for a woman;

2) nine piles of sorgho for a man;

3) a nine-notched ladder *(liti)* which enables the soul to escape.

The *drom* then breaks the ladder which is burned with the corpse.

On the 13th day after the death, they make a life-sized effigy of the deceased *(sob)* stuffed with wheat chaff. The face is modelled in clay, and resembles the deceased as much as possible.[13] A man carries this effigy on his back to a river bank and then throws it in the water. In the home of the deceased, the lamas recite the text of the Bardo while the *drom* officiates on the roof terrace. He fumigates with juniper, then burns tsampa and butter turning counter-clockwise around the brazier.

On the night of the 13th day after the death, the *drom* officiates. He must 'capture the dead man's spirit that, in the form of a *man*, can become harmful to the living.' This is the ritual of the *man-rawa*. In the central room of the house where all the family members have gathered, the *drom* makes small sacrificial cakes *(kantu)* with wheat flour and barley tsampa. A butter lamp burns near the cakes which have been arranged in a row. Before closing the doors, two or three members of the family climb to the roof, whistle three times to call the *man* (pl.), then close all the exits. In front of the door, the *drom* places a board on which he spreads first a layer of soot, then a layer of ashes. He recites prayers, beats the drum and predicts the form in which the spirit will appear. The latter is said to have left footprints on the board: it may be a dog, snake, bird ...[14]

The dhāmi of Chainpur-Bajhang (May 1973)

We were talking about trade, and the protecting divinity of trade in the valley of the Seti with a former official of the King of Bajhang, when suddenly the official announced that he himself was a *dhāmi*, intercessor for the divinity Langa.

Our informant, who was of the Thakuri caste and more than 70 years old, had become a *dhāmi* subsequent to a long illness at the age of 13. The divinity Langa took possession of him. Langa, who is one of the most noteworthy figures in the popular religion of the upper valley of the Seti, is associated with intercessors, oracles and therapists.

P. R. Sharma gives the following definition of the *dhāmi*:

'Most of the leading divinities (in West Nepal) manifest themselves through a human medium, the oracle, who in the

in the local parlance is called a *dhāmi*. The initiation of *dhāmi* is based on the principle of reincarnation ...'[15]

I will only summarize the account of Langa's origin by noting the primary episode of the myth as it was told to me by the *dhāmi* of Bhopur-Bajhang:[16]

'Coming from the Indian Plain, Langa crossed through Doti, Deura, Jhota, Tumtali and finally arrived in Kumaltar (Chainpur) in the Seti valley. When he arrived there, he asked his way in the form of a chant:

I want to go to the Manasarovar
Give me a little rice and a goat ...

The people of Kumaltar answered;

We don't give rice and a goat
to just anyone ...

'Langa became furious and cast a spell; soon afterwards, Kumaltar and its lands were washed away by the waters of the Seti and its tributary, the Bauli Gad.

'Then Langa, who is still living near Manasarovar, killed Grank who threatened the world.'

Langa is a divinity with extensive magical powers who intervenes when the *dhāmi* officiates. As in the case of Langa, the *dhāmi*'s power enables him to control evil spirits responsible for sickness and calamities. To worship his tutelary divinity, the *dhāmi* must remain absolutely pure; he may not have intercourse nor any contact whatsoever with a woman who is menstruating, nor may he eat a meal prepared by an impure woman. If this interdiction is transgressed, he may die.

The *dhāmi* of Bhopur, when consulted about the future, touched his tongue to a red-hot spatula. The divinity then took possession of him.

The Tibetan Intercessors, lha-pa

To conclude, I will only mention the intercessors among the populations of Tibetan language and culture in the upper Himalayan valleys. These intercessors, called *lha-pa* or *pa-chen* in Tibetan, are laymen who are possessed by a tutelary divinity (they use the expression *lha-'bak*, lit., 'the divinity falls, descends ...) (Stein 1974).

The divinity speaks through this medium when he is in a trance. It is generally a serious illness during childhood that leads to the state of *lha-pa*. By divination, a lama can identify the

divinity possessing the medium. There is therefore no conflict between the Buddhist religion and the belief in intercessors, but rather mutual respect.

At Tarap, in the region of Dolpo, a Drogpa *pa-chen* officiated for a patient (Jest 1974b). After filling a ladle with rice, tsampa, tea leaves, beer malt, pimento, corn kernels, white barley *(nas-dkar-mo)* and a little meat, he circles the patient three times with the ladle and calls the demon:

> 'Demon who ever you are,
> wherever you live, in the east, south, west, north
> above,
> Here is good food,
> Come take it,
> but if you stay in this house, we will beat you ...'

The intercessor then places the contents of the ladle on a stone outside the village.

The intercessors I met appear to be the guardians of the traditions and cultural elements in the society, as well as the intermediaries between man and the supernatural. Is it possible for a group of communities to suddenly lose its intercessors? What would happen in that case to the cult of ancestors? The protection of inhabited places? In brief, the culture of these communities?

The problem of the relationship between the intercessor-therapist and his culture has been raised on various occasions. In a recent article, P. Mitrani (1973) examines this question in a totally different region, namely, Amazonia. Discussing the role of therapist from a cultural point of view, he writes:

> 'The Indians share a set of principles, beliefs, and ceremonies of a religious nature that indicate, we feel, the profound cultural unity of the ethnic group. Now, among the group of beliefs that, more than any other socio-cultural aspect, reveal the existence and cohesion of the group, "sickness" occupies a central place ..."

Therefore, we must establish a type of research grid that would include work in the fields of ecology and ethnopsychology. The ecologist, the anthropologist, the doctor and the analyst would collaborate with the interpreters themselves, in the study of the various forms of mediation, which are still poorly understood.

Corneille Jest

1. Field research made during the summer of 1953 with the valuable assistance of Fr. J. M. Brahier, Tanyang, Kalimpong District. According to the oral traditions the Lepchas (who refer to themselves as Ron) are the first inhabitants of Sikkim, of which Kalimpong District used to form part. Living mainly by hunting and random gathering, they also cultivated the soil by 'slash and burn' methods.

   The earliest historical documents guaranteeing their presence in Sikkim date from the XVIIth century, when a chieftain *(royal-po)* of Tibetan origin displaced the local Lepcha chiefs. Needless to say, this change of rule was not brought without important repercussions. So far as political organisation was concerned, the Lepchas found themselves relegated to the lower strata of society. As for the religious sphere, the Lepchas still continued in their ancient beliefs but a whole network of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries began to overspread their country.

   Later the Lepchas suffered yet further repression, firstly at the hands of the Bhutanese (1700-1708), and then from the Gorkhas who invaded their country at the end of the XVIIIth century (1779-1780, 1789-1792). Finally, after the establishing of the British Protectorate of Sikkim, Nepali immigrants were actively encouraged to settle in the southern parts of the country by the British authorities.

2. *thiṅ* is an established Lepcha word for lord. See Mainwaring (1878:152). *boṅ* means mouth (Mainwaring 1878:261) and one may consider the possibility of a connection with the Tibetan term *bon*. 'T' following a word indicates it is Tibetan.

3. *ta se thiṅ*. The name *ta-se* cannot be separated from Tibetan *bkra-cis* (pronounced *tra-shi*) 'good fortune'; it is used by the Lepchas to refer to Padmasambhiva.

4. The informant described how a clay effigy of one's enemy is made and pins or knives stuck into it.

5. Divinations are performed by means of a rosary, grains of rice or other places by a horoscope-book.

6. *rum-lyan*, the land of beneficient divinities *(rum)*; see Mainwaring (1899:337).

7. Cf. Jest (1960). In 1973, there are no more *boṅ-thiṅ* in the Tanyang area. They call indifferently the Tamang *jhãkri* or the Rai *bijuwā*.

8. K. B. Bista (1972) used these notes in discussing the problem of the Kuldevatā. An almost identical account was presented

by H. B. Rajbhandari and S. L. Pradhan (1973).

9. Following this account, I asked questions of various Magar I met during my visits. Some of them are familiar with this myth. The Gurung have an almost identical myth. B. Pignède gathered a series of myths *ps* (Tib. clas. *dpe*) in Gurung country. These myths have not yet been published. One of them narrates the creation of the world and the life of 'Father Kharab Kle'. The latter successively had seven daughters and nine sons. The sons tried to kill their father, but did not succeed. In this article, we do not intend to analyze the myth and the transposition of its principal elements into the Kuldevatā ceremony.

10. In 1967, there were three *drom* in Lete and one *drom* in Khanti.

11. Cf. Bibliography C. Jest (1974a).

12. The seeds are from the *ritho* tree (Sapindus sp.).

13. In Tibetan, *osobs*: image that replaces a person.

14. Observed in Rato Dhunga: officiating priest, Purna *drom* of the Gau-can clan.

15. Cf. P. R. Sharma (1974). Langa is not included in the list of divinities recorded in the region.

16. Gagana Jang Bahadur Singh, Director of the College of Chainpur and Dirga Raj Jaishi helped with my research. The complete text of the myth will be the subject of a later publication.

17. Concerning the divinity Maṣṭā, see P. R. Sharma (1974) and the article of M. Gaborieau (1969), translated into English for this volume.

XVI

PRELIMINARY REPORT ON SOME JHĀKRI OF THE MUGLAN

The collection of ethnographic material published in Volume III of Peoples of Nepal Himalaya[1] includes several references to *jangri/jhankri* and even to 'Jangrism'. Once again our attention is called to this poorly understood aspect of the magico-religious life of these regions. Speaking of the 'Takali', Mr. J. Kawakita (1957:90-91) writes:

> 'The religion of the people came originally from *Hindu Tantra* and in the Takali language is called *Jangri*. The term *Jangri* refers to the priesthood of this religion. About 400 years ago Lamaism came down from the North. Lama fought with *jangri* and won. Jangrism was suppressed, its sacred books and writings were burned and Lamaism became the dominant religion until recent times. However there still remain some Takalis who were Hinduists and some who continue to adhere to Jangrism ... According to an informant Jangrism is a kind of practical religion with which nowadays every Takali is familiar. Jangrism has neither gods nor sacred images. Nor does it have any complicated ritual. The writer was further told that today there are no special practitioners called *jangri* but that the members of each family are *jangri* and take part in very simple religious rites ... The writer was unable to learn anything about the content of Jangrism as a religion, but he imagines it to be a sort of Shamanistic cult ... Professor G. Tucci told the writer that Jangrism and Bonnism are the same ...'[2]

M. Kawakita seems to accept without question the existence of one single 'Jangrism'. I am not yet convinced that this theoretical view will be confirmed by actual facts. We are dealing here with a magico-religious complex whose geographical limits are not yet determined and whose very substance is presently unclear.[3] The following notes were taken down directly in Nepāli during a field trip to Kalimpong from 1958-1960[4] and concern only the region of Darjeeling and the sub-district of Kalimpong. I hope this study will encourage other researchers to investigate this problem and to either complete or correct my information. The question must

be studied in Nepal itself.

What is a *jhãkri*[5] of Muglan?[6] 'Diviner, conjurer, wizard', says Mr. Ralph Turner; however, elsewhere, s.v. *ban jhãkri*[7] (that is, '*jhãkri* of the jungle'), he (Turner 1931:419b) writes, 'A hobgoblin who inhabits mountain caves and entraps human beings'. The *jhãkri* is therefore both a being and a spirit. For the moment, let us consider only the being. If I had to give a dictionary-type definition, I would say, 'an interpreter of the world'; this avoids the pejorative connotation of 'conjurer' or 'wizard'. These latter terms are generally associated with irregular activities that either stray slightly from the societal norms or that are blatantly anti-social.[8] The *jhãkri*, however, appears to be the very vehicle of a certain Nepali traditionalism. He is a person who falls into a trance, during which time voices speak through his person, thereby enabling him to diagnose illnesses and sometimes cure them, give advice for the future and clarify present events in terms of their relationship to the past. He is therefore both a privileged intermediary between spirits (who cause and cure illness) and men; between the past, present and future; between life and death, and most importantly between the individual and a certain social mythology. It seems to me that he may belong to any *jāt* and may take as a pupil a person from any other caste;[9] a Lepcha may play the role of *guru* for a Nepali and vice versa.[10] This master *(guru)*- pupil *(celo)* relationship is moreover the only relationship existing on the human level in the *jhãkri* brotherhood.[11] I hesitate to call them 'priests' since they do not constitute a clerical hierarchy with a spiritual head. There are however certain practices common to all *jhãkri*; they all perform a *pūjā* to their master-spirit at each full moon, and at each full moon of Bhadau,[12] they do a *gurupūjā*. However, the activities and forms of worship vary from one *jhãkri* to the next.

These variations are due to the individual training of the *jhãkri* (I am obviously excluding variations due to a difference of caste, social situation, etc.); these variations are also due to the difference in the demands of the clientele. All the *jhãkri* I have known had a trade that provided them with a livelihood - carpenter, homeopath, mailman, electrician, gardener, goldsmith, DDT sprayer, etc. Their activities as a *jhãkri* generally took place at night. They all agreed that being a *jhãkri* was perhaps a privilege but at the same time a tiresome burden with considerable responsibilities. It is exhausting to be possessed by spirits and the good *jhãkri*, often called for nocturnal consultations, frequently suffers from lack of sleep. This essentially nocturnal activity of the *jhãkri*, coupled with the fact that the *jhãkri* tradition is entirely oral, explains why Western research on the *jhãkri* is so limited. I too, along with Mr. Kawakita, have heard of ancient books. It is possible that these books exist or have existed, but I have never seen them.

The jhãkri's drum is called a *ḍhyāṅro*,[13] the curved baton with which he beats the drum is a *gajo*.[14] The drum and baton constitute the minimum equipment of the practitioner: and it is by the sound of the drum echoing far in the night that one knows a *jhãkri* is at work. For routine consultations, the *jhãkri* does not wear special clothes. I will speak later of the costume and gear of the *jhãkri* at the time of the *guru pūjā*.

When and how does one become a *jhãkri*? Generally, but not always, it happens rather young (approximately between the ages of 8 and 14) at the time of a physical and psychological crisis. When an informant is questioned about the nature of this crisis, he often answers in generalities; he did not feel well, he began trembling, he met spirits who taught him certain things which were later classified and clarified by a *jhãkri* of whom he became the *celo*. The details concerning the crisis and the training of the *jhãkri* vary greatly, and rather than immediately formulating a theoretical model, I prefer to relate *in extenso* the account a *jhãkri* gave me of his own initiation. It seems important to take into account the way in which the subjects themselves relate their experiences, (cf. Friedrich and Buddruss 1955) since the common belief in the validity of these experiences constitutes the religious and psychological foundation upon which is founded the sociological existence of the *jhãkri*. The greater part of the Nepāli-speaking population does not doubt the authenticity of these experiences. To give only one example, I knew a Damai (caste of tailors) who exhibited progressive political views and who often bitterly criticized the 'old ways of doing things' with regard to religious rituals. He generally entrusted himself to the care of Bengali or European doctors. This same man, however, complaining of a stomach disorder, was not hesitant to seek treatment from a Tamang *jhãkri* - who moreover treated him with a certain amount of success. The southernly slopes of the Himalayas form a region generally characterized by religious and social tolerance.[15]

Following is the account of Gobind Prasad Rasaili; I have translated it as literally as possible, which explains certain repetitions and the awkwardness of expression. I have replaced the first person by 'Gobind Prasad', etc., in order that the reader may better understand the events. The Rasaili are a sub-caste of the Visvakarma and Gobind Prasad's *gotra* is that of Kasyap Rsi.[16]

Gobind Prasad was 34 years of age in 1959. He was born in Sumbuk Basti, near the Namchi Post Office in Sikkim.[17] His father was a *sardār* on a tea plantation in Darjeeling before retiring to Sikkim. Gobind Prasad came to Darjeeling at the age of 16. He is presently working as a goldsmith in a shop near the Chowk Bazaar, in the centre of the town. He is married and has three sons.

At the age of 13, Gobind Prasad fell ill while working in the fields near Manpur in Sikkim. He had a high fever, his legs became stiff, and he wanted neither to eat nor drink. He dribbled at the mouth. The villagers told him he had malaria. This was in the month of Asār (June 15 - July 15).[18] For three months, he stayed in bed. During this time his father died.

At the time when Gobind Prasad took to bed, a small boy came to see him. This boy wore white Nepali clothing, his golden hair was long and fell to his knees. His face was red like a *khursāni*.[19] He came to Gobind Prasad's house twice a day for seven days. At 7.00 in the morning and towards 4.00 in the afternoon he gave Gobind Prasad tea with milk and helped him drink. Each time, he also gave him a small, white, sugary pill. He would raise Gobind Prasad by the shoulders to help him drink. At the end of the seven days, the boy returned at night. This time, he brought along a leaf of *kaṭus*,[20] *amliso*,[21] and a *ghuṅriṅ*.[22] He also brought a small saucer made of white stone and filled with sand. He opened the door himself and called three times, 'Gobind Prasad!' There were six or seven other people in the room, and they were all very frightened. Gobind Prasad's maternal uncle *(māmā)*[23] was among these people. The boy put the lamp next to Gobind Prasad's bed and lit it. There was no *ghiu* (melted butter) in the lamp, and the lamp burned with a blue flame. Everything became very dark: no one spoke for they were all very frightened. The boy took a *rudrācchemālā*[24] from around his neck and put it around the neck of Gobind Prasad. He said some *mantra*, wiped Gobind Prasad's body with the leaves, helped him to a standing position, and then put him back to bed. He then said that within 21 days, he would return to get Gobind Prasad. 'If someone else comes to get you before the 21st day you will die. But do not be afraid.' Thereupon three young girls with long black hair down to their knees entered the room. Each was dressed in a green, red and white *sāri* that they wore over the shoulder. The girls looked at Gobind Prasad and said that they too would return for Gobind Prasad on the 21st day: 'We will leave you now. Your mother also will soon die but do not be afraid. You will be all alone, but we will help you.' The boy added, 'You must not be afraid. We will return within 21 days, but the 18th day, you will be severely ill.' With these words, the boy and girls left.

After this visit, Gobind Prasad's mother and uncle wanted to give him food, but he could eat nothing. Little by little, he became more ill and the 18th day, around 5.00 in the afternoon, he fainted. The others in the room believed him to be dead and said so; others prepared tea for those who would come to keep vigil over the corpse. At nightfall, friends and relatives arrived and, crying, gathered around the corpse.

At midnight, someone came to the door and called three times: 'Gobind Prasad!' The people in the room heard the voice and,

thinking it was a *masān*,[25] were afraid. They examined Gobind Prasad and tried to give him some water. His chest was warm, as was the top of his head. Suddenly, for the first time in weeks, Gobind Prasad raised his right arm. They tried to awaken him, for he seemed alive. His hand fell back down. They could find no trace of pulse nor of breathing, but he was warm. The people said that for three days he seemed to be unconscious.

During this time, Gobind Prasad felt that, as if in a dream *(sapanā)*, he was climbing a very high mountain. He walked behind the boy who from time to time looked back to say, 'Come, *dāju* (elder brother)'. They climbed one behind the other until they reached a place where there was a large, circular house surrounded by flowers. The house was made of white stone; on the roof there was snow. The house had four doors, but no balconies nor windows, and it was located atop a mountain. 'Here is Himālgiri, Sumerugiri', said the boy. They entered the house by the West door. The room in which they found themselves was lined with two sets of shelves. On the upper row, there were 21 small white stone lamps that glowed. On the bottom row were books, manuscripts written on square pieces of *pahāri* paper. The boy pointed to the books and said they contained *mantra*. He then opened the East door and said to Gobind Prasad: 'How far can you see from here? What do you see?' Gobind Prasad looked and said that he saw something in the distance, sometimes sunbeams, sometimes moonlight. 'That must be the sun and the moon', he said. The boy said that was good, that was right, and that he would open the North door. When the door was opened Gobind Prasad saw in the distance Mahādeo, wearing a tiger skin, holding a *trisūl* and a small baton in his right hand and facing Gobind Prasad. The latter said 'I am afraid. Close the door, please. I can go no further.' The child answered: 'Why are you afraid? It is my father.' Gobind Prasad saw that Mahādeo's mouth, lips and teeth were all red: it was because of this that he was so frightened. The boy said, 'Do not worry. I will call him and you can sit on my knees.' 'How can I do that?' asked Gobind Prasad. 'You are small and I am big. I cannot sit on your knees.' The boy sat down calmly, his hands clasped as if he were praying. Suddenly Gobind Prasad saw that Mahādeo was very close and smiling. 'Thank you, my boy, thank you: *tathā astuti*, it is good.' The boy drew Gobind Prasad onto his knees and Gobind Prasad realized that the latter had become very big, with a long, white moustache and a beautiful beard and a *ţiko* in the form of a *trisūl* on his forehead. He held a *ḍhyāṅro* in one hand and a *gajo* in the other. He wore a long white coat with a wide red belt, and his pants were the white pants of the Nepalis. At the right of his belt hung the tail of a white yak; at the left, the tail of a black yak. In the belt in front of him was a *thurmi* in the form of an arrow.[26] His hair was brown and very long, and he wore nothing on his head.[27] 'Do not be afraid,' he said, 'I am your younger brother *(bhāi)*.' Then Mahādeo disappeared, and the boy returned to his normal size. He said: 'You saw my father. You have seen my temple. Now we

must have *parsād*.'[28] On a stone tray, he served Gobind Prasad milk and rice cooked in milk. He took the tray from a small sack,[29] saying: 'My father gave me this for you. This place is my temple. The place where I live is the river Tukharni where the copper mines are. I am not the only member of my family. I have six brothers, older and younger, I am the third son. My mother also lives in the Himalayas. Later I will also show you my mother.' After they had eaten, they went towards the door by which they had entered the house. The child sat down facing the door, hands clasped. The door opened, and Gobind Prasad noticed that the Himalayas were very near. Near the door and facing him was a lady seated on a lion; two young girls were at her right, one at her left. All three smiled at Gobind Prasad.[30] The woman was dressed in red, and had long black hair: she held nothing in her hands. The girls were dressed just as they were when they had previously come to the door of Gobind Prasad's room. The lion was brown with a long mane. Upon seeing Gobind Prasad, the lion roared and tried to catch him, but the woman calmed the lion. Then the boy closed the door again, and led Gobind Prasad back inside. He then said to Gobind Prasad: 'My brothers are not here now. They are in the Tukharni valley. There is still another door, but I cannot let you see what is on the other side. Your dead father is there with Yamarāj: I do not want you to see them.'

Gobind Prasad stayed in the white house for three days in the company of the boy. They ate rice and milk, and remained very calm. Then the boy brought Gobind Prasad back to the bottom of the mountain to his room. Before leaving Gobind Prasad alone in his bed, the boy told the other people in the room: 'Do nothing to this man. Do not touch him.' And then he left. Those who heard the boy's voice at the door were very frightened. Gobind Prasad made a small movement during his sleep. The men in the room cried and said: 'Is he really dead? Did a *masān* take possession of him?' Since the majority believed Gobind Prasad was dead, they covered his body with a cloth. But his maternal uncle said: 'I do not care what happens to me, whether I die or not, I must know the truth.' and he removed the shroud from Gobind Prasad. When the uncle saw that the body was very cold, he also was convinced of his nephew's death.

In the morning, friends and relatives began making a bamboo stretcher to take Gobind Prasad to the *ghāt*.[31] The majority of those present were Rai and Lepcha. There were women as well as men. They cut two long bamboos and a third to make the cross pieces. Until then they had not taken the exact measurements of the body. When they measured, they were surprised to see that the bamboo they had cut was the wrong size. Other peices were cut: the measurements again proved to be inaccurate. They could not understand, and so decided to remove the shroud. Inside the material, there was nothing.

All those present began whining and screaming: 'Where did he go?' They wondered if what happened was a result of the voice's warning them the previous day not to touch Gobind Prasad. They began looking everywhere for Gobind Prasad, and informed the village authorities of what had happened. This all took place in the morning, 21 days after the child's first nocturnal visit.

In the village there lived a *sādhu* by the name of Dhanbahadur Rai. He was a Kabiraj *sādhu* (Turner 1931:74b). He had gone off early that morning to cut grass for his horse. He climbed a hill above a field belonging to Gobind Prasad's family. In this field there was a *Simhadevīthān*.[32] The hill upon which Dhanbahadur Rai climbed was nine bamboos high. Half way up, Dhanbahadur suddenly noticed that a corpse was suspended from the trunk of a *jhākrikāth* (Turner 1931:231b) that grew perpendicular to the slope. The corpse was balanced on the stomach, with the arms hanging at one end, the legs at the other. Dhanbahadur was at once uneasy and angry. 'Who threw that corpse there?' he yelled. He made so much noise that many villagers came running. They wondered how they could lower the corpse from the tree, since the *sādhu* had only his *sānle* (Turner 1931:597b) with him. If they swung the corpse, it might fall on someone. With the means at their disposal the men could not bring the corpse down. But the *sādhu* insisted: 'One way or another, we must bring it down. If it is possessed by a *saitān*,[33] it will eat people. Anything could happen and we will have trouble'. They therefore left for the village to fetch two cords, which they then attached to the corpse. Fifteen or twenty men, pulling from above, tried to lower the corpse to the ground. They succeeded in freeing it from the tree, but had much difficulty untying the knots that enclosed the corpse. When they finally succeeded, they found nothing inside the knots. The corpse ran headlong towards the bottom of the hill. Gobind Prasad (that is, the corpse) returned full-speed to his house. He entered the house, but said nothing. His mother, crying, hugged him.[34] As soon as she touched him, he began trembling, and continued trembling the entire day,[35] without drinking, eating or saying a word.

The family members summoned a *bijuwā*[36] from the Rasaili sub-caste called Mangale Seti. As soon as he was with Gobind Prasad, he said, 'He was taken by a *masān*. Today I can do nothing. Tomorrow I will perhaps be able to do something'. The family did not seem satisfied with this answer, and they left to find another *jhākri*, of the Rai caste, named Roji Bijuwa. This Rai said he could do nothing. He nevertheless had several *mantra* tried, but without success. 'He was taken by a *ban deutā*',[37] he said. Then another *jhākri* from the sub-caste Shanker arrived; he was called Mangale. This *jhākri* said: 'It is agreed. I will cure him. But I will need two men to beat the drum, 25 rupees, a red cock, five bottles of *raksi* (Turner 1931:525b, 524a), a *pāthi* (Meerendonk 1959:245) of rice. If you accept the expense, come for me at my home', and he left. Gobind Prasad's mother collected the necessary payment

with the help of the neighbours and went with several friends to the jhãkri's house. The *jhãkri* left for Gobind Prasad's house, carrying his *mālā*, his *ḍhyāṅro* in his hand. When Mangale arrived at the door of Gobind Prasad's room, the latter's trembling subsided. Mangale began calling his own *deutā* (Mangale jhãkri) and when this *deutā* came to him he began shaking violently. Mangale said to Gobind Prasad: 'You are surely a *deutā*, a *bhut*, (Turner 1931:479b) a *masān* or a *boksi* (witch) (Turner 1931:461a). Who are you? Say who you are. Until you tell me, I will whip you with thorns and I will give you bad *dhup*' (Turner 1931:330a). Gobind Prasad became very red and answered: 'You do not know me. Do as you please!' On the fire was a very hot tripod *(odhān)*. Mangale took it, put the tripod on his shoulders. Gobind Prasad said: 'For me, that is nothing', and he grabbed the tripod, took it from Mangale's shoulders and put it on the ground. Gobind Prasad then said: 'You try to frighten me with all that. Do you want to see what I myself can do?' He got up and sat in the fire. Neither his clothes nor his person was burned. Gobind Prasad then got out of the fire, sat down in front of Mangale's *pūjā thān* and said: 'Now I am going to come onto your body'. Suddenly Gobind Prasad felt better. Mangale however began shaking violently, ran into the fire, was burned, ran out of the fire and into a thicket of thorns where he was scratched, ran from the thicket only to fall into the latrines. He succeeded in getting out of the latrines and ran quickly towards the river Jukharni, 1¼ miles from the house. A half hour later, he returned, still shaking. He took his place before his *pūjā thān* and after a while, the *deutā* left his body and returned to Gobind Prasad's.

At that time, Gobind Prasad was seated at some distance from the *pūjā thān*, and his mother was giving him tea. He began again to tremble violently and said: 'You do not know me. You asked me nothing. But I am *ban bāsi* (savage, jungle-dweller) *ban-jhãkri*. My name is Balsingh jhãkri. You cannot touch me. You cannot make me your *celo*. If you want to see my power, look, I will enter your *ḍhyāṅro*'. Mangale's drum began playing. 'Now I will leave your *ḍhyāṅro* and enter your *kalas* (Turner 1931:79a)'. The drum stopped, and the *kalas* started to shake. Everyone - there were about 35 men present - was very surprised and frightened. Gobind Prasad then said: 'Now I will return to the body of my *celo*', and Gobind Prasad again trembled violently. Mangale therefore took five rupees, a cock, a bottle of *raksi* and put them at the feet of Gobind Prasad. Mangale then said: 'I can do nothing against this *deutā*. Let us try the Lepcha *bijwāmi*[38] called Yankit'. Yankit's house was approximately one quarter mile from Prasad's family's house. Mangale, Gobind Prasad's mother, Gobind Prasad, and numerous villagers went to her house.

After having seen Gobind Prasad Yankit said: 'Very well. I will make him my pupil. But within three months, I also will die'. She led Gobind Prasad to his *mandir*[50] and there she transferred

her *deutā* to Gobind Prasad and she took his *deutā* upon herself. Yankit and Gobind Prasad stayed there all night. She worshipped his *deutā* and he paid tribute to hers. During the night, the *deutā* said that Gobind Prasad's mother would die in the month of Māgh (January-February) - and this did indeed happen. Yankit lit three wicks which she put in Gobind Prasad's mouth. He swallowed them, feeling nothing. When she struck him with a black yak's tail, he ceased to tremble. When she struck him with a white yak's tail, he began trembling again. She taught him two short *mantra*,[40] and said: 'Everything you wish to know, I shall teach you'. At the end of the night, he stopped trembling. She gave him a garland, put a *ṭiko* on his forehead and sent him back home, saying that within three days she would come and personally teach him everything.

For three days, Gobind Prasad rested at home. When he awoke on the morning of the third day, he had the feeling that the *ban deutā* would come to him. When he ate *piṭho* (Turner 1931:380b) with his tea, his mouth remained wide open. Throughout the entire day he could not close his mouth. In the evening, after having gone for water, his mother suddenly saw the boy on the road, and he said: 'Go away from here! Leave this path'. Panic-stricken, she dropped the water she was carrying and ran away as fast as she could. The boy then entered Gobind Prasad's house. He carried a *ghuṁrin* in his belt. He put the *ghuṁrin* in Gobind Prasad's mouth. Something resembling milk flowed from the *ghuṁrin*: it tasted and smelled like milk. Gobind Prasad swallowed several drops and suddenly realised he could close his mouth. He drank more of this 'milk'. Then he felt completely well and free. His illness had disappeared. Gobind Prasad's younger brother was also there, and he too saw the young boy.[41] The latter said to Gobind Prasad: 'From now on I will no longer show you my face as I do now. In the future, I will come to you like the wind. When you were sick, I came to save you from your sickness and from death and to prove to the others that there are *deutā*'. He then gave Gobind Prasad a *mulmantra*. 'If you say this *mantra* at any time whatsoever, it will save you from danger and bad influences'. Thereupon he left.

During the two months that Gobind Prasad pursued his training under the direction of Yankit, nothing exceptional happened. Once, towards midnight, Gobind Prasad began trembling. The boy came to him: 'If you have troubles, think of me and I will come. When you summon me, offer *dhup*, call me and I will come onto your body. I will watch over you and I will help you. If you go to cure other men, I will accompany you with my presence. If you meet tigers, snakes or other dangerous animals, I will place myself before you and I will protect you'. Then he left. Gobind Prasad became calm again. He learned 700 or 800 *mantra* from Yankit during these three months. At the end of this period, Yankit died. This is why Gobind Prasad has no living master. He himself has no pupils in Darjeeling, for he does not like to show his knowledge. But he has some pupils in Sikkim.

Although the details are somewhat obscure, this account sheds some light on the manifestations and consequences of the above-mentioned crisis. We immediately see the close association between spirits and men which we must now attempt to make clear.[42] If the reader, who has been rather abruptly immersed in this account, feels a bit disoriented, his confusion somewhat resembles that of the patient who for the first time calls upon the services of a *jhãkri*; he does not clearly understand his uneasiness and looks for points of reference.

The *jhãkri*, possessed by a spirit[43] he did not summon and whose very name he does not know at the outset, must later perfect his training under the direction of a *guru*. According to my information, the master instructs his pupil piecemeal; he gives him *mantra*, bits of 'mythology', *pūjā* and curing techniques, ritual instructions and all this in bulk. The teaching takes place when both master and pupil have the time. There are slowdowns, standstills, and then feverish training sessions. The programme also depends on the demands of the clientele. It is clear, however, that *we* cannot proceed in this manner: we are obliged to proceed in a logical fashion in order to attempt to give an overview of the relations between the *jhãkri* and the society on one hand, and between the *jhãkri* and the world of spirits on the other. But in the end we will be in the same situation as the *jhãkri* with regard to his knowledge: we will arrive at a more or less complete understanding. All *jhãkri* are not scholars. I knew some who were more or less gifted for languages, more or less marked by Hindu or Nepali culture, more or less intellectually curious, more or less inclined to travel. Each *jhãkri* has his own personality and his own reputation, which is a curious mixture of hearsay, respect for his knowledge, for his skill, for his cures, real or imaginary (especially if the latter are spectacular). I have never heard a judgement made on a *jhãkri* with regard to his caste. What seems to be most important to his clients is the authenticity of the jhãkri's spiritual experience.[44] From some *jhãkri* little is expected: they are known to be drunkards, cheats, practical jokers. Nevertheless, there will always be a clientele to call upon them in order to spend an entertaining evening, to hear the drum, prepare the *thān* (children especially like the cookery aspect of the ritual), hear the names of feared spirits recited, see the *jhãkri* fall into a trance and give advice that they, the clients, can mull over in their spare time on following days. Even if the *jhãkri* are not seriously believed in, they provide, in a world where entertainment is rare, a living spectacle, where the unexpected is not lacking and for which it is worthwhile to spend a few rupees. Some *jhãkri*, on the other hand, are serious, modest, sure of themselves, well-informed and inspire respect even from the foreign ethnologist. It is of this second category that I wish to speak. But it must not be forgotten that these men are essentially interpreters of a certain form of culture, and that it is characteristic of an interpreter to have variable gifts and competencies. A good *jhãkri*,

like a good pianist in our culture, can give a bad performance.

Who was the first *jhãkri*? The majority agree on Mahadeo. Mahadeo and a *bhoṭiyā* lama met on Mount Kailas. The two competed to draw forth from the jungle, using nothing but *mantra*, the following objects: 1) a *ghuṁrin* (see footnote no.24); 2) a *rudrācchemāla* (see footnote no.22); 3) *dumsi ko kãṛo*.[45] By the same means, they also tried to fill an empty *kalas*[46] with water and go to the sun. Mahādeo caused a *ghuṁrin* and a piece of *kāulo* (Turner 1931:82a) to come out: the lama attracted a *ṭaṭalo* (Turner 1931: 239a) flower and a piece of *kāulo*. Mahādeo drew forth *rudracchemālā*; the lama a *phreṅ-ba* (rosary). Mahādeo brought out *dumsi ko kãṛo*; the lama a prayer wheel. Mahadeo filled a *kalas* with water; the lama drew out a book of *mantra (mdo-maṅ)* and a *gtor-ma* (sacrificial cake). Mahādeo arrived halfway to the sun, but everything became dark and he could no longer follow the path; the lama arrived at the sun. Since the lama had caused additional objects and a greater number of objects to come forth from the jungle, and since Mahādeo had not succeeded in reaching the sun, the latter became angry and began to construct a drum. With this drum he would be able to reach the sun. It was agreed that henceforth the lama would perform their *pūjā* during the day, whereas Mahadeo would perform his at night.[47] Mahadeo and the lama then separated and each settled down in different parts of Mount Kailas.[48]

How was Mahādeo's drum made? Mahādeo sent the *dumsi ko kãṛo* into the jungle to bring back *siṅaro* (Turner 1931:605b) wood from which to make the frame of the drum. Then he sent the *kãṛo* and the *kāulo* to the Himalayas in search of a deer. The *kãṛo* watched over the deer and the *kāulo* closed the deer's eyes. Mahādeo waited for three days without doing anything else to the animal; then he skinned it without killing it. From the skin, he made the drum heads. Then he sent the *ghuṁrin* to fetch *bet* (Turner 1931: 465a) from which to make the straps to brace the drum heads. Mahādeo had an assistant by the name of Sime.[49] He sent Sime to Modes (the plains of India) to look for *dubho*.[50] Sime brought back seven *dubho* branches. Upon the order of Mahādeo, he again set out to bring back *rudrācche* from Kailas. After having done this, he again left for Modes and brought back *riṭṭho* (Turner 1931:537b). Mahādeo closed the drum by attaching the *murrā* (handle). Before closing it, he put seven blades of *dubho* and a *rudrācche* inside. He then made five *riṭṭho-mālā* and seven *rudrācche mālā*. Then he sent the *dumsi ko kãṛo* to a region between Modes and the Himalayas to find a hen. They found one and brought it back. Upon their return, Sime attached the hen near Mahadeo. The hen laid no eggs, and Mahādeo ordered that she be released. Although she was freed, the hen stayed near Mahādeo, and 17 days after her arrival, she laid an egg. A red dog arrived. Mahādeo did not know where it came from. The dog walked around a bit and then approached the lama. The lama, irritated, killed the dog with a *bajra dhuṁgo* (lightning stone); that is, the stone and not

the lama killed the dog. The dog's *hansa* (Turner 1931:628a) approached Mahādeo's drum. The dog's spirit assumed the role of guardian of the drum and the egg. In Mahādeo's absence, the dog's spirit watched over his gear and protected it from thieves. However, the dog's barking annoyed Sime, who complained to Mahādeo. Mahādeo made a bow and arrows, put them with the egg and drum, and told the dog he could use them as he wished. And Mahādeo told the dog that Sime could have access to them, also. From that day on, the dog, with his bow and arrows, was known by the name of Siriṅ Sikāri. This was the first Sikāri.[51] Today, tradition distinguishes 16 Sikāri. Here are their names and characteristics:

1) Ekle sikāri : the lone hunter. He is the assistant to the others.

2) Lāwāri sikāri: the colour-bearer. He leads the *sikāri* troupe, carrying the seven-coloured flag: white, red, blue, green, yellow, light blue and cream. *Lāwā* means 'flag'. It is made of a long cherrywood staff, surmounted by an iron spearhead. Various coloured cloths are attached to an iron ring at the base of the tip. The whole thing is called barcho.

3) Bagāli sikāri: the guardian of the troupe. *Bagālinu* means 'to group together'.

4) Chamung sikāri: this one is bad. If seen at the time of a *pūjā*, he may jeopardize the *pūjā*'s success. This name is perhaps related to *chamkanu*, 'to be insolent'.

5) Khurma sikāri: throws needles out from the earth. Inflicts illnesses such as sciatica (*khuro* means 'pin').

6) Namruṅ sikāri: found under fruits and flowers, he protects. He is good.

7) Bajra sikāri: lightning (*bajra* = lightning).

8) Chalenā sikāri: makes fun of people. He is at once good and bad. (*chale* (adj.) = 'to pretend').

9) Kheluwa sikāri: plays everywhere (*khelnu* = to play).

10) Sarmā sikāri: bends people by inflicting attacks of paralysis.

11) Ṣiddha sikāri: causes internal haemorrhage.

12) Sama cherin chatmaghe sikāri: if he is not properly worshipped, he inflicts fatal pains of the stomach and heart.

13) Raktaban sikāri: causes haemorrhages (*rakta* = blood).

14) Bān sikāri: moves about like the wind and knocks people over (Turner, p.433: 'the paralysis is said to be caused by jungle spirits who shoot the sufferer'); (*bān* = arrow).

15) Kāli sikāri: black, like a black *bhut*

16) Solasarma sikāri: if people speak badly of him, he immobilizes them on the spot.

When men are sick, the *jhãkri* must name the 16 *sikāri* and designate the one responsible for the illness. He says some *mantra* and wipes the sufferer with a white cloth. He must then sacrifice a cock (of any colour). If there is no cock, he must sacrifice 16 hen's eggs. The *jhãkri* wipes the patient with these eggs and then, without having broken them, throws them into an abandoned spot. If I said there were 16 *sikāri*,[52] it is because the legend recognizes this number, just as it recognizes, as we shall see, that there are only 7 *jhãkri*. In reality, there are many more than seven human *jhãkri*, and every Nepali is to some extent a *sikāri*.

After a certain time, Mahādeo decided that he perhaps did not need all the objects that he had made. If he found a man who would pay tribute to him, he would give him these objects. On the night of Rikhitarpani,[53] Mahādeo went to a place where people were bathing. A small boy from the jungle was washing himself. The boy was called Lāṭo (Turner 1931:553b). After having bathed, he made a *pūjā* to Śiva. Mahādeo said: 'Where did you come from? Who are you?' 'Me, oh I live in the jungle and I eat fruit.' 'Why do you make your *pūjā* like that?' 'I would like to see Śivaji. I do not know my mother or my father but I want to see Śivaji.' Mahādeo said: 'My name is Rudra Mahādeo. I have never seen Śiva either.' Mahādeo reflected: 'If this boy loves Śiva so much, why not give him all my things?' He therefore led the boy to see the objects he had made. But the boy continued saying that he wanted to see Śivaji. Mahādeo told him: 'Stay here and wait. You will see him.' Mahādeo left and changed his appearance. Previously, he had long hair, wore a tiger skin and a *rudrācchemālā* he returned with his long hair hidden behind the nape of his neck, wearing a deerskin and a *riṭṭhomālā*. He said to the boy: 'What are you doing there? What do you want?' The boy told him what had happened. Mahādeo said: 'I am Śivaji. From this day on, you must worship Mahādeo and not Śiva.' Then he left, and resumed his usual appearance. He returned to the boy and said: 'So! Did you have a *darsan* of Śiva and what did he say?' The boy related exactly what had happened. 'So, what are you going to do?' asked Mahādeo. 'I will adore them both: I cannot give up Śiva,' was his answer. Mahādeo was delighted, and said he would give the boy what he wanted. The boy asked for the objects Mahādeo had shown him. Mahādeo said: 'But what will you do with them?' The boy replied that he would do as Mahādeo wished. The divinity taught him how to use these objects and how to cure men, and said: 'Go wherever there are men, and teach them as I have taught you. Where will you live? I would like to know so that I can find you again.' The boy said: 'Since I have no home, I will have to live in the jungle.' From this day on, Mahādeo therefore called the boy his *ban jhãkri* and said: 'Go where you will. Bring people into the jungle to teach them.' The boy followed the god's instructions and took as his first pupil a young Brahman.[54]

Here we have therefore the first master and his pupil. There are presently many[55] human *jhãkri*, but legend generally distinguishes a group of six or seven, a sort of prototype of the present-day *jhãkri* brotherhood. These 'legendary' *jhãkri* do no evil; they are all *ban deutā*. They help people who are seriously ill. In order to do this, they choose unmarried young men of less than 21, who suffer neither from skin diseases, bowel disorders, nor burns, bring them to the jungle and teach them to cure people. They do not bring girls[56] or 'shady characters' from the cities. They keep the boys for 3, 5, 7 or 13 days or for 3, 5, 7 or 13 years, and then bring them back to where they initially met them. There are no external signs indicating that a boy has been taken by a *ban jhãkri*. Here is a list, among others, of the first *jhãkri*: Rittai-jhãkri, Lāṭo-jhãkri, Balsingh jhãkri, Sun-jhãkri Laṭhe-jhãkri, Bhairab-jhãkri, Bāla jhãkri. Gobind Prasad provided me with this list. We immediately notice that the third *jhãkri* on the list has a man's name whereas the others have descriptive epithets.[57] We see therefore that Balsingh jhãkri, alias Gobind Prasad, stands with relation to his six older and younger brothers. The gear worn by Gobind Prasad when he officiates at, for example, a *gurupūjā*, once more emphasizes these relations. He wears four *rudrācchemālā*. Let us call them 'A', 'B', 'C', 'D'. The boy who visited Gobind Prasad at the time of his illness gave him the first *rudrācche* necklace. Gobind Prasad left this necklace in Sikkim. He replaced it with an identical one that he found hanging on a tree near the river Teesta subsequent to a prophetic dream. To the 108 *rudrācche* that form the necklace, Gobind Prasad himself added two *ghaṇṭi* (Turner 1931:153b) and six *ghuṁri* (Turner 1931:150a) (divided 3, 2, 1) that he himself made. 'A' is the sign of Mahādeo, and it is called Balsingh-jhãkri. Without it, Gobind Prasad is powerless. This necklace is put over his shoulders and hangs in a U form on his chest and back. Unlike 'B', 'C', and 'D' it is not worn as a bandoleer. The thread of 'A' is red, whereas the others have a black thread. 'B' is composed of 78 beads of which 74 are *rudrācche*, 3 are small black bells representing Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśvara and the last is a black bell representing Rittai-jhãkri. 'C' is composed of 78 *rudrācche* 2 *ghuṁri* and 2 *ghaṇṭi* are attached. This necklace is the sign of Lāṭo-jhãkri, Laṭhe-jhãkri and Sun-jhãkri. 'D' is composed of 108 *rudrācche* without *ghuṁri* or *ghaṇṭi*. This is the sign of Bala-jhãkri. Thus, when Gobind Prasad puts on these necklaces, he dons, so to speak, his relations with his brothers.[58]

We have sketched above the relations between the *sikāri* and the *jhãkri*. Another group, this time of women, is that of the *ban ko burheni*.[59] There are seven of them and they cause illness and necessitate *pūjā*: 1) *Laṭṭe burheni*:[60] makes one mute, deaf and blind. She is found in hot and cold places. 2) *Kāli burheni*: acts like No. 1, and is her partner. She lives in the jungles of the Himalayas. 3) *Seti burheni*: she has a white face.[61] She pulls on people's nerves. 4) *Chamki burheni*: she pulls on people's eyelids and hair. She walks in plains, sandy places and bamboo

thickets.[62] 5) *Khuṭ Khaṭṭai burheni*: leaves hen-like footprints. Anyone who follows these footprints becomes crazy and dies. Her face is black, as are her clothes ; because of this she is different from the other six *burheni* who dress in white.[63] 6) *Thāṁne burheni*: her clothes are dirty and crumpled. She causes headaches, sneezing, coughing and the flu.[64] 7) *Phurluṅ bagali burheni*: she bothers people who are eating. She causes sneezing and yawning. If she attacks, her attack is always followed by that of the other six.[65] The sacrifices made to these *burheni* consist of flowers, fresh fruit, ginger, egg and honey, betel-nut, betel leaves, spices and *sāl dhup* (incense). While offering *sāl dhup*, prayers are said to the group of seven *burheni*. At the same time, Acyut sikāri[66] must be honoured. The latter resembles a Lepcha, but he is in fact a Nepali; he wears white pants, a white shirt, has hair worn long but cut in bangs on his forehead: he carries a *cyāpso* (Turner 1931:188b). He helps the seven *burheni* but he himself causes no particular illness. These seven *burheni* also command the seven *sok-pā*. These are giants, with hairy bodies like monkeys. They walk on two feet and leave 18-inch footprints. They kill animals, buffalo in particular, but they do not attack men.[67]

We see that *jhākri* thought does not embrace the same world of relationships as classical Hinduism. The *jhākri* and his clientele are more or less Hinduized, but are also often influenced by Tibetan culture. To give an idea of their vision of Indo-Tibetan cultural relations, here is how the evangelization of Tibet was explained to me. A ṛṣi (they did not seem to agree on his name) left India to bring the four Veda to Tibet. At that time, Tibet was inhabited solely by *rākṣas* (sk. *rākṣasa*). Thanks to the repeated teachings of the Veda, the *rākṣas* were transformed into men. This first attempt at cultural colonization must however be considered a failure. It was followed by another attempt, this time Buddhist. One day, Buddha bhagawān's *celo* complained to him about the alimentary habits of the Tibetans: the latter ate human flesh. To put an end to this practice, the Buddha went to Lhasa and advised the Tibetans to stop eating their brothers and to eat him instead. They answered: 'Since you are of royal family, your flesh must be good: we therefore agree to do what you ask.' Buddha said: 'You may begin with my feet.' He crossed his right leg over his left, and called Agni deutā to help him. 'Eat me,' said the Buddha to the Tibetans. Each time they tried to eat him, Agni deutā protected the Buddha with fire and prevented the Tibetans from approaching his feet. 'Why do you not eat me?' asked the Buddha. 'We cannot.' 'In that case, you must stop eating men,' was the response. At first the Tibetans insisted, saying that they wanted very much to eat men. Finally the Buddha succeeded in convincing them that it was better to eat other kinds of flesh and even say some prayers before eating anything at all. To persuade them, he gave them prayer-wheels to hold in one hand and rosaries for the other. He commanded them to kill nothing, neither

man nor animal, and to eat only what died a natural death. They finally accepted and the Buddha told them: 'You must keep an image of me in each of your houses, and to remind yourselves of what fire can do, you must also keep a lamp lit in each house.' And he gave them as *mulmantra* 'Om mani padme hum'.

This cultural anecdote is perhaps not to be taken literally, but it sheds light on popular thought that has been until now overlooked. The people on whom the *jhãkri* exerts his influence care little about historical truth and read almost no religious texts. Only few of the pandits in Darjeeling itself can easily handle Sanskrit. I personally have attended Hindu *pūjā*, with text in hand, and found that the officiant clearly understood little of the text he was reading and merely summarized the difficult passages in a savoury mixture of Hindi and Nepāli that his audience at least could understand. Everything quickly becomes *mantra* in such an atmosphere.

We have cited some spirits with which the *jhãkri* come in contact. There is some uncertainty with regard to the classification of some spirits as good or bad. My notes do not enable me to generalize on this point.[68] I am reserving for a later work the description of monthly *pūjā* and the jhãkri's *gurupūjā*.[69] This will also be the time to elaborate on the nature and relationships of the spirits who alight *āṅ mā* 'on the back', as they say, of human *jhãkri*. But to situate the *jhãkri* more precisely in his universe, here are certain details concerning the relationship between *jhãkri* and spirits as it is manifested by the *gurupūjā* ritual. Today the majority of *jhãkri* perform this ritual at home; in 1960 only six or seven *jhãkri* came to Observatory Hill, Darjeeling, on this occasion.[70] The *gurupūjā* rites span a period of two days. A *gurupūjā* I attended included rites that lasted 2½ hours the first day, and the following day, from 6.45 p.m. until 6.00 the next morning. During the month of Sāun (July-August), all the *deutā* are supposed to go underground and live alone.[71] At the time of the *janaīpurnimā*[72] all these *deutā* emerge and resume their places in this world. If for exceptional reasons a *jhãkri* cannot pay tribute on that day,[73] he apologizes to the *deutā* and fulfills his duties at the full moon of Mansir.[74]

At the time of a *gurupūjā*, the *jhãkri*, while playing his drum, passes through the seven undergound levels of the world, which are steps in the mystical circuit through which he travels without leaving his place before the *pūjā thān*. From the depths of the ocean, the *jhãkri* brings the *ses-nāg* to the earth's surface and he then crosses the upper heavens to arrive at the residence of Viṣṇu. Here is a list in local spelling and in descending order of the levels of the world:

Om Viṣṇulok;
Sāt Lok;
Jāp Lok;

Mahar Lok;
Swarga Lok;
Bhoor Lok;
Bhoo Lok;
Atāl;
Bitāl;
Sutāl;
Talatāl;
Mahatāl;
Rasatāl;
Patāl.

As do all the gods, the *jhãkri* then descends to Nepal. He brings home from the holy places a host of great and small *deutā*, not forgetting the local *deutā* of Modes or the Darjeeling region. Then he calls upon his *gurudeutā*. At a given moment, the *jhãkri* mimes the actions of the prototype *jhãkri*: he rows, cultivates, harvests and stores rice, hunts, etc.

I hope I have already shown the complexity o the relations between the *jhãkri* and the world of spirits, and the simplicity of the jhãkri's relationship with men. All men may speak to the *jhãkri* who in turn has access to a multiplicity of *deutā*. If the *jhãkri* recognizes the caste system, he does not appear to be a prisoner of it on the religious level: he may have pupils and a master from either a higher or lower caste than his own. This does not however imply that the *jhãkri* ignores the marriage rules of his caste. The jhãkri's religious personality is, as one might expect, typically Nepali: he is informal, rather given to brawling, curious and resourceful. He is not afraid to descend to the bottom of the ocean nor to climb to the highest peaks. Little given to snobbism, he associates, with the same cheeky respect, with the local divinities of Muglān and the great personages of Śivaism. Often travelling, he is well acquainted with the sacred geographical places of Nepal and his linguistic background is often surprising. When he falls into a trance, he speaks the dialects of the spirits who possess him. Once he has come out of the trance, he no longer remembers the words he has just pronounced.

I do not know to what extent the role of the *jhãkri* in the past was different from his present role. It seems reasonable to assume that, in the past, the jhãkri's role and prestige were somewhat greater. But the written documents are lacking to reconstruct his history. Even the main lines of the jhãkri's evolution remain unknown. Today the *jhãkri* assumes functions that in our western societies are divided among doctors, religious historians, psychiatrists, priests, astrologers. From group to group, *jāt* to *jāt*, *thar* to *thar*, the *jhãkri*'s role may have varied in the past just as it seems to vary today. At the beginning of the 19th century, Francis Hamilton (1819:25) said: 'Each tribe

appears originally to have had a priesthood and deities peculiar to itself ...' Many informants told me that, formerly, *jhãkri* of their regions played an important role in funeral ceremonies. They also indicated that even today *jhãkri* (or their local counterparts, *phedangbā*, etc.) in the Eastern Nepali regions of Rai and Limbu, officiate in birth, funeral and marriage ceremonies. But I do not have firsthand acquaintance with these areas.

The fact that he does not function as a member of a church, caste or social movement has perhaps spared the *jhãkri* from persecution. He lives on the fringe of the great religious movements, on the outskirts of church conflicts, and perhaps it has always been thus. It is possible that I have overly neglected the context in the presentation of my material, but I have not done this unmindfully. It would be improper to attribute the same world view to a blacksmith who has lived in Calcultta, a Chetri who was a soldier in the plains and a jockey in Darjeeling, and a carpenter who earned his living in Kalimpong and was often called for consultation in Sikkim. Hinduism is insufficient to characterize such different human experiences. We are dealing here with a frontier region that has always been subject to various cultural influences.[75] Specialists in the history of religions will undoubtedly notice the shamanistic influences (Eliade 1961:152-186) in my documents, the traces of local cults and ancestral cults, not to mention the Tibetan, Lamaist and Bon influences. The contribution of Hinduism and particularly of Śivaism is fundamental, but we must eventually try to determine the presence or absence of Tantric elements.[76] Perhaps we must even look for distant Taoist influences; we are not so far from Kāmārūpa whose sovereign, many centuries ago, asked his Chinese interlocutor for a Sanskrit translation of the *Tao-to king*.[77] It seems to me premature to attempt a synthesis of these various influences on the basis of our present documentation. Moreover, I want to insist on the fact that the *jhãkri* brings something new to the world of his clientele. He introduces them to a terminology, a new system of magico-religious relationships and proposes new causes for ancient ills. Upon pre-existent beliefs, the *jhãkri* 'grafts' his own interpretation, fruit of his own experience and his personal training. The integration into a new ensemble may be and often is purely temporary. This integration becomes definitive only when the *jhãkri* integrally transmits his knowledge to a pupil - an exceptional event for the society as a whole. It seems clear to me that the student, in turn, interprets and embellishes the material in terms of his own competency and experience, and so it goes from generation to generation.

A. W. Macdonald

1. Cf. Kihara (1957). I prefer not to translate the English into French of an author whose thought does not seem clear to me.

2. Mr. Tucci undoubtedly was careful not to make such a peremptory assertion. Perhaps he wanted to say that the Tibetans call certain Nepali religious activities *bon-po*. For the use of the word *bon-po* by the Tibetans, see Mr. D. Snellgrove (1958:269, n.27).

3. Before we can distinguish the *jhãkri* from the other magico-religious specialists of the Himalayas, we must have a clearer idea of what exactly a *jhãkri* is.

4. I should like to thank the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique and the VI^{e} section of the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, Paris: my stay in Kalimpong was facilitated by the financial aid of these two organizations. I should also like to thank my friend D. K. Shanker of Darjeeling, to whom I owe my introduction to several *jhãkri*.

5. I am using the spelling given by Sir Ralph Turner (1931: 231b). This dictionary was in a large part compiled in Darjeeling itself and *jhãkri* corresponds to the current pronunciation in this region, where I have not heard the *jangri* or *jhankri* noted by Mr. Kawakita in Nepal, itself. Mr. M. C. Jest (1960:131) mentions 'the *ja-kri* or *jan-kri* a kind of magician intercessor'. These two forms are inaccurate. The *jākrī* of Mr. Snellgrove is also surprising. Mr. G.W. Briggs (1960:442) writes: 'In the Central Himalayas a class of sorcerers or exorcists is called Jagri or Jagaria. These are a sub-caste of the Hill Doms'. Mr. Briggs quotes Mr. Hutton: 'In Almora the spirit is supposed to enter the Jagaria himself ... the name appears to come from *jigar*, the liver or vitals cf. *jigarkhur*, *jigakhar*, an enchanter, sorcerer'. My friend Bernard Pignède called my attention to the fact that Vansittart (1894:234) cites the name 'Jhankri' among the names of the Thapa clans of the Magar.

6. Muglān is, in my opinion, the name given by the Nepalis to the regions inhabited by Nepalis outside the political boundaries of Nepal. The Nepalis of Muglān are called Muglāne. There seems to be some uncertainty in the use of these terms. Turner (1931:511b) indicates: Muglān 'the country of Hindustan' and Muglāne 'an inhabitant of a country outside Nepal'. The term dates from the period of the Moghul occupation of the North of India.

7. P. Hermanns (1954:80) writes: 'Another being is the bon sacri 'the wild magician' ... the wives of the bon sacri

are the Lidini'. This author appears to have misunderstood what his informant said. *Lidi* in Nepali means 'horse dung' (Turner 1931:55b).

8. For example, the article s.v. *conjuring* in the *Encyclopedia Brittanica*, London, 1951, vol. 6, p.260, begins as follows: 'The art of entertaining by pretended performance of those things which cannot be done'.

9. Oldfield (1880, I:187) wrote: 'There is no class or caste of Baids or doctors; anyone possessing the necessary knowledge may be a doctor.'

10. Certain *jhãkri* seem to have received part of their training in the plains where they had *ojhā* as masters. T. J. Platts (1884:103a) derives the word *ojhā* from Sk. *upādhyāya*. Mr. Briggs (1960:404) and Crooke seem to be of the same opinion although the former has certain reserves. Without wishing to raise a difficult philological problem, I would like to point out that Sk. *upādhyāya* Prakr, *uvajjhaa* 'master' is also at the distant origin of the Chinese (Ch. characters) the title by which Buddhist monks were known in Chinese. Pelliot (1959:213) remarks: 'If men of great learning *(po-shih)* were popularly addressed in India by a Prakrit form of *upādhyāya* it is the exact counterpart of what occurred in Central Asia when the same *po-shih* used in I-Ching's text passed into Uighur as *bahsi* and became a designation of Buddhist masters ...'

    Concerning the magico-religious role of the *ojhā*, see, for example, Mr. G. W. Briggs (1960:404-457) and P. Bodding (1925:1-132). Cf. recently Rahmann (1959:681-760). Possession by spirits is also widespread in southern India (Dumont and Pocock 1959b:55-59) and the index of T. Burrow and Mr. B. Emeneau (1961:593), s.v. possession (by a god or evil spirit).

11. A *guru* may have several *celo*. Nursing Chetri of Darjeeling boasted (1960) of having formed 41 pupils. He had gained the reputation of a specialist in the use of *mohani*, love charms, and because of this was in great demand. When I knew him, he was about 50; he had become a *jhãkri* at the age of 9. Subsequent to a move, a voyage, a change of job, etc., a *jhãkri* may have more than one *guru*. But I think it is rare for him to have two simultaneously in the same region.

12. August-September. Cf., Turner (1931:467b).

13. Turner (1931:269) says simply 'a big drum' and does not point out the association with the *jhãkri*. According to my experience, the jhãkri's drum is always called this, and I

have never heard the word *ḍhyāṅro* applied to other types of drums. The *ḍhyāṅro* is a single-handed drum with two heads (generally made of deerskin and monkeyskin); the handle *(murrā)* is made of wood and always sculptured. I wonder if the 'Tibetan drum with a *phur-bu*-like handle', illustrated in plate IX, facing p.369 of R. de Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1955) is not in fact a *ḍhyāṅro*. Is this drum the same as the 'fine old piece' mentioned by Mr. P.H. Pott (1951:128) and plate XVIII-1 of the same work? Mr. Pott does not fail to link the decoration of this drum's handle with that of the Tibetan *phur-bu* and he adds, 'This type of drum is beaten with a bent drumstick having a weighted end covered with leather.' In any case, the two-sided *ḍhyāṅro* does not have the same shape as the *phyed-rṅa* mentioned by Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1952:-49-157). As for *rṅa chuṅ*, Minoru Go (1954:84) finds the meaning of 'mountain drum'. 'Drum' in Balti is called 'dyang': A.F.C. Read (1934:94).

14. Turner (1931:133a): 'Rod-the stick used by a *jhākri* to beat his drum with'. The *jhākri* holds the drum handle in his left hand, one side of the drum held at face level. He beats the exterior side of the drum by bringing towards his face the *gaja* that he holds in his right hand. When he is officiating, the *jhākri* speaks directly to one side of the drum while he plays on the other side. Concerning this way of playing the drum, cf. Mr. H. Hoffman (1950:202), plate 7.

15. Sylvain Lévi (1950, I:317) wrote: 'Man in the presence of nature confusedly feels an infinite multitude of forces ready to move into action at the expense of his weakness; his pantheon, always open, always has room for newcomers. The priest is not a doctor of souls; he is a specialist in rites; like the god he serves, he has an area of competence in which he excels and gladly leaves the field open to his neighbours.'

16. One of the best known specialists on Nepal, Professor Ch. von Fürer Haimendorf (1960:12-32) recently published an interesting study. See also L. Petech (1958:179-189). We need, however, detailed studies of descriptive ethnography for the entire area of Nepal; lists of the names of the subcastes of the principal groupings of the country have not yet been systematically established by researchers. I had a great deal of difficulty orienting myself among the *thar* in Darjeeling where the castes live one on top of the other.

17. Namchi is indicated, for example, on the map facing page 256 in Sir R. Temple (1887) and in Murray (1955) on the map facing page 316 (between Darjeeling and 'Gangtok'). Modern detailed maps of these regions are not easily found.

18. That is, at the beginning of the rainy season.

19. Turner (1931:130b): *Khorsani* 'Red pepper, chili'.

20. Turner (1931:68b): *Castanopsis hystrix*.

21. Turner (1931:22b): *Thysanalaena agrestis*.

22. Turner (1931:158a): *Neyraudia madagascariensis*.

23. For a recent list of kinship terms, see Mr. Meerendonk (1959:247-252).

24. Necklace made of beads on a type of *Elaeocarpus*. This type of necklace is also used in Tantric ceremonies (G. Roerich 1958:146): s.v. *raksa*. Each *jhākri* possesses several of these necklaces.

25. Turner (1931:496a), G.W. Briggs (1920:132-133; 1960:674, index); E.S. Oakley and Tara Dutt Gairola (1935:24); E.T. Atkinson (1884:818-840) writes: 'Persons possessed without any assignable cause are for the time being said to be under his influence.' I do not have the exact page number, since I have only a typewritten copy of this chapter.

26. It is more or less a description of the traditional ceremonial clothing of the human *jhākri*. Black and white yak tails seem to be used especially by the Limbu jhakri. All the *jhākri* do not use them: for example, Gobind Prasad did not have any. I learned of a story concerning youths who steal from the king of the dead, Yamarāj, yak tails which enable their owner to kill or revive a human being. For further uses of *cāmara*, see my article (Macdonald 1968: 419-444) and Yule and Burnell (1886:214-215), s.v. *Chowry*. In Nepal the inanimate symbol of Manjuśri was a fly-swatter made of a yak tail (see E. Burnouf 1925:501). Concerning the *thurmi*, Turner (1931:299b) gives the meaning: 'a small iron spoon (?)-small cutting instrument (?)'. In this case, it is the Nepalese equivalent of the Tibetan *phur-bu*: the Nepali instrument is made of sculptured wood. As for the form, the *thurmi* often resembles the handle *(murrā)* of the *ḍhyāṅro*. The long white coat is the *jāmā*, worn, as Turner (1931:215) correctly remarks, by 'children, wizards and brideqrooms'. This *jāmā* may be compared with the various white garments mentioned by Mr. R. A. Stein (1959:407, n.60), cf. p.350 of the text.

27. He therefore did not wear the headdress consisting of peacock feathers attached to a band of cloth woven in white, blue and red and decorated with cowries which is the usual

headgear of the *jhãkri* at the time of a *gurupūjā*. (On this headdress see, in particular, Macdonald 1966:52, n.68).

28. Turner (1931:368b): *parsat*.

29. The word used here for sack is *jābi* (Turner 1931:214b). This is no doubt the sack worn by the human *jhãkri* while he officiates. This sack, slung over the right shoulder, hangs at the left of the waist. It is often decorated with cowries, wild boar's teeth, etc.

30. The woman was Siṃhadevī; her three daughters, the *tin kanyā Siṃhadevī* (Turner 1931:73a).

31. Place where corpses are burned (Turner 1931:156b); *masān ghāt*.

32. The altar where SiṃhadevĪ was worshipped. Concerning *thān*, (Turner 1931:295b).

33. Turner (1931:621b): 'The devil, a devil, a demon.' Cf. G. W. Briggs (1960:500). The *saitān* do not come when they are called nicely. They come only when one calls them brutally while playing on a *rkaṅ-gliṅ*. The word, used by the Nepalis, is Tibetan: The femur in question is often from a *teli* (Turner 1931:290a) and G. W. Briggs (1960:679) in his index. Tiger femurs are also used to call *saitān*, but, I have been told, they may not be played on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays. In order to obtain a *rkaṅ-gliṅ*, one goes to a cemetery at midnight, naked and with ashes covering his body. Once a fresh corpse has been recovered, the *jhãkri* throws clay on it while reciting *mantra*. The corpse rises without bending its knees. It rises three times and is again 'killed' three times by the *mantra(s)*. The *jhãkri* has brought along two bottles of *raksi* and a *ser* (Turner 1931:62a) of *sidur* (Turner 1931:604a). When the corpse stands up for the third time and opens his eyes and mouth widely, the *jhãkri* throws the *sidur* in its eyes and pours *raksi* in its mouth. Thereupon the corpse falls down again. The femur may now be cut from the corpse. The femur is kept in clay *(maṭṭi)* for 15 days and must not be brought immediately to the jhãkri's house. After the 15 days, the flesh will be detached from the bone: a hole will then be made in the femur. The *jhãkri* will then say *mantra*, play for the first time on the *rkaṅ-gliṅ*, and then bring it home where he will keep it in his *thān*. One of my *jhãkri* informants used the femur from a small girl who, judging from the size of the femur, must have died before she was one year old. I have never attended such rites, but several informants told me about them. They all said that it was a much more difficult task to take a corpse's skull than its

femur. Concerning the use of *rkaṅ-gliṅ* by the Tibetans, see Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956b:398).

Concerning these rites where corpses must be raised in order to take a part of the body, I should like to point out the frequency of the *Vetālasiddhi* in Indian, Brahman and Jaina stories. If the living are active in resuscitating the dead, the dead are by no means disinterested in the living. It is particularly true in the case of the *bāyu* who accidentally died of drowning, suicide, burns, etc., and who become like the *sain*: wandering spirits that catch the living. The Newari call them *khyāk*. H. Jorgensen (1936: 47) gives the equivalent of *khyāk* as 'a Pisaca'; Turner (1931:131b), says: 'ghost, spirit of a dead man which haunts the house and, according to some, prevents other spirits from giving trouble'. It is correct that the *bāyu*, alias *khyāk*, does not leave a family's house (where it can settle on two men simultaneously) to move in elsewhere. The *bāyu* comes onto the *jhākri*, but this does not exclude the latter's possession by other spirits.

34. Mistake or ritual blunder: she was a widow.

35. Characteristic sign of possession.

36. Turner (1931:441b): 'A Jimdar *dhāmi*, sorcerer'. Cf. L. A. Waddell (1900:312); W. Brooke Northey and C. J. Morris (1928:226-227); E. T. Dalton (1872:103), and H. H. Risley, (cited in *Census, 1951, West Bengal, The Tribes and Castes of West Bengal*, Alipore, 1953, p.254). Among the Limbu, Dalton and Risley point out the Phedangma (*Census, 1951, West Bengal*, p.223, 254). Also see W. Brooke Northey and C. J. Morris (1928:226-227). Does this word, written with variants in the 19th century sources, have any relation to the Nepali *baidāṅga*? Turner (1931:459b) gives the meaning of this latter word as 'the science of medicine according to the system of the *Ayurveda*'. I have often heard of the 'Phedungba' of the Limbu, but no one seemed sure of the spelling of the word. Cf. footnote 38.

37. Spirit - divinity of the jungle.

38. My informants all confirmed what Mr. Gorer (1938:216) writes: The Lepcha say Yābā for the possessed male and Yāmā when it is a woman. I am giving here the exact word used by the person with whom I spoke. I have done this elsewhere in my account where it seems useful. However, Gobind Prasad told me that the Lepcha said that Yankit was a Yāmā. Cf. G. B. Mainwaring (1898:323). Imansingh Chemjong (1961b:232) indicates s.v. *Yābā*: 1) *bhutyāhā, dhāmi*, exorcist; 2) *bijuvā, jhākri*, exorcist; s.v. Yāmā: *bijuvāni (jhākri stri)*, female exorcist; and s.v. *phedangma*: *purohit*, priest

(Chemjong 1961b:194). There are also interesting facts concerning the study of the Limbu by the same author (1961a). In Santabir Lama (Pākhrin) (1959), we find the Tamang *bonbo* as the equivalent of the *Nep-jhākri*. This last book is very important, and I will soon come back to it. See Macdonald (1966a:27-58).

39. The grotto of Senchal near Darjeeling is called *mandir*. It is not a *pūjā thān* but something more permanent.

40. I hope to study elsewhere the *mantra* used by the *jhākri*. I was able to copy Gobind Prasad's *mantra* notebook, but an examination of it here would lead us too far away. I would however like to mention the botheration caused by his loaning me the notebook. At first Gobind Prasad permitted me to take the notebook from Darjeeling to Kalimpong. A few days later, he became ill. He attributed the illness to the fact that his *deutā* had been offended by his loaning me the notebook, and he asked me by letter to return the notebook immediately - which I did. Several weeks later, Gobind Prasad became sick again. I visited him and he seemed to be afflicted with a particularly severe case of jaundice. He told me that it was all his fault, that he had spoken to me too freely of things that should have remained secret and that as a result his *deutā* became angry and punished him. Although I maintained friendly relations with him after this time, he no longer wanted to give me any other valuable information.

41. I knew this younger brother who entirely confirmed what Gobind Prasad had said. At the time I knew him, he was becoming initiated in the art of the *jhākri*. He seemed very emotional; the very mention of the name of the *deutā* (which we will see farther on) physically upset him to the point where he became pale and trembled and refused any further discussion of the pantheon of the spirits. I was unable to learn who his master was.

42. The details of the *jhākri*'s initiative experience vary greatly. Gobind Prasad's experience seems exceptional to me because of the detail with which he remembers it. The *jhākri* is an exceptional being in the society: it would not be unwarranted to say that because of this, each *jhākri*'s experience is exceptional. I intend to reproduce other spiritual biographies in other works. If I have chosen to relate Gobind Prasad's here, it is because it seems to be a good opening to the study of these phenomena.

43. Possession by spirits has been attested all over the south of the Himalayas, especially when it is a question of Tibetanized populations. See, for example, S. Ribbach

(1940:49); but the *lha-pa* are also a sect. G. Atkinson (1884:Chap.9). (I do not have the page reference) writes: 'Ganganath sometimes possesses a follower and through him promises all that they desire to those who offer the following articles ... altogether forming a fair spoil for the Ghantuwa or Astrologer who conducts the ceremonies ... The person who acts the part of one possessed by any Bhut is called 'Dungariya'. Again in the *Gazetteer of Kangra District*, Chap.III, *The People*. B: *Social and Religious Life*, we find: 'The *devta* is also invoked by way of oracle during his appearance at fairs and *jagrās*. The mouthpiece of the god is his *gur* or *chela* who on such occasions, stripped half naked, lashes himself with iron chains and gasps out answers to the questions asked by the pious worshippers around, sometimes interrupting the responses to burst out into a passionate homily on the wickedness of the people, with an exhortation to them in the name of the *devta* to mend their ways.' Concerning the district of Dehra Dun, see R. N. Saksena (1955:p.iii). Concerning Sikkim, see particularly, G. Gorer (1938:215) and following, and for Tibetan facts, see de Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956b:Chaps.21 and 27). As for Bhutan, I lack first-hand information. When I asked the Nepalis if the Tibetans had *jhākris*, they sometimes answered: 'Yes, they have *chos-rje*.' Now, in Sikkim *dpa-bo* would be the equivalent of *chos-rje* or *chos-skyoṅ* (Lamaic medium) of central Tibet. The terminology applied to the various types of possessed people must be re-examined closely: I personally have difficulty understanding what distinguishes the *jhākri* from the *dhāmi* (Turner 1931:337). Perhaps we could base the distinction on the quality of the trance, the 'true' *jhākri* being the one who, at the beginning, was possessed in spite of himself. It would, however, be impossible to recreate an historical account of each case. In any event, the *dhāmi*, as well as the *jhākri*, practices various types of *jokhanā* (Turner -931:223-224). The Nepali *jādugar* as a group have not as yet been studied.

44. Mr. Tucci (1932:684), speaking of a Buddhist *sādhu*, writes a sentence that would well apply to our *jhākri*: 'These Indian and Tibetan saints lived in a kind of mystical atmosphere which gives a peculiar colour to all their experiences; the truth for them is not about external facts but rather about the meaning they have for them or the ideal significance that they attach to them.'

45. The porcupine quills (Turner 1931:83a) know many uses. For instance, when the *jhākri* have contests opposing their magical powers, these quills, reduced to powder after having been burned in the fire, are thrown from one individual to another, accompanied by *mantra*.

46. Brass or copper water pot.

47. In general, the *jhãkri* begins around eight at night. Ceremonies undertaken during the day often lead nowhere. However, certain *jhãkri* maintain that to undertake (and successfully complete) a cure at any given hour of the day is a proof of strength.

48. If this story is not a result of a Tibetan influence, it at least indicates a desire to copy Tibetan traditions. It reminds us of S. C. Das (1881:206-211); cf. Hoffman (1950a: 230-32; 1950b:73-74). According to the Bon-po, their representative came out the winner of the test (G. Tucci 1937:iii). Pignède had gathered analagous legends among the Gurung. Some Tamangs assured me that the first *jhãkri* was Narubon and not Mahādeo. One often hears of this type of religious competition between, for example, *deutā* who are Viṣṇubhakti and others who are Śivabhakti, and also between Lama and Brahman.

49. I have never heard an explanation of this name, but Turner (1931:608), gives: 'adj. of or belonging to the marshes - s° *bhume deutā* (*jhãkri*'s language), gods of water and dry land.'

50. Turner (1931:315), s.v. *dubo*.

51. The hunting dog is a well-known personage in the tradition of many highlanders, particularly in Indochina. The name given here to this 'hunter' is somewhat surprising. *Sirin̐* in Nepalese means 'the temples of the head' (Turner 1931: 609a). It is possible that there has been some confusion with a legend according to which the first *jhãkri* came from the hair growing on Mahādeo's temples.

52. They also speak of Ṭokri Sikāri. He is dressed in white and has long black hair. He carries a bow and arrows and on his back a covered basket *(ṭokri)*. In this basket there is ginger *(aduwā)* and *kodo* (Turner 1931:107a). The description of the processions of spirits are always oral, and I have never seen figurines or drawings representing them. In the descriptions immediately following this *sikāri* comes the couple known as Nayādeutā. Some say that this couple comes from sunbeams. In her belt and to the left the *ranī* wears a sickle. Her clothing is white, her hair very black. She wears a necklace made of pieces of coral and coins of four *annas*. Her earrings and nose ornament are made of gold. On each wrist she wears a bracelet made of a single circle of silver to which is attached a silver coin. On her back, she has a basket and a *chapani* filter (Turner 1931:191b). She has everything she needs in her basket. She always has

with her a comb, *kaṅīyo* (Turner 1931:533a) and a hairbrush, *thākro* (Turner 1931:295b). The *rāja* wears white Nepali clothes; he has nothing in his hands. This couple helps the other *deutā* in their work. They cause tooth, eye and ear troubles, shaking and attacks of paralysis. Of course, if they are properly worshipped, they do not inflict these misfortunes. They are often said to be Limbu *deutā*. The order of the procession is Ṭokri Sikāri, the Nayādeutā couple, then the 16 *sikāri*.

53. This is the full moon of Bhadau or Sāwan. See Turner (1931), s.v. *rikhi-ḍoro*.

54. Every Nepali has a tendency to ennoble his caste ties; but it is also said that at the time of the first *celo*, men had no idea of castes and knew no sickness.

55. It seemed impossible for me to obtain precise information on the number of *jhãkri* in the area. I knew about ten *jhãkri* well. The *jhãkri* is not highly regarded by the police authorities, no doubt because of certain rites of necromancy which he practices. He does not willingly open up to the Western foreigner, who himself is the object of local police suspicion. But it seems that the number of *jhãkri* around Kalimpong has decreased since Independence. I do not know if this decline is attributable to the recent influx of a new Tibetan population, or to the cessation of commerce with Tibet and the subsequent disorganization of social life that caused many small and large-scale Indian merchants to leave for the plains, or finally if this decline can be attributed to the departure of a certain number of Nepalis who, unlike their fathers and grandfathers, foresee a brighter future in Nepal itself. Probably all these factors must be taken into consideration along with still more. The Indian administrators with whom I have had the occasion to talk about the *jhãkri* feel that the *jhãkri* activities are destined to disappear soon because they are incompatible with the progress of a state given to socialism. These administrators implicitly consider the *jhãkri* as magicians. The Nepali merchants on the other hand have mixed feelings with regard to the *jhãkri*. More than one, after pretending to be shocked by my interest in this aspect of his culture, finally admitted that, when his child was sick, he successfully solicited the services of a *jhãkri*. I have often noticed a benevolent understanding for the *jhãkri* among the Nepali pandits who rarely expressed an open hostility. If they did criticize them, it was rather on the social level. I have never observed any politization among the *jhãkri*: their activity is never directly opposed to what one might call Hindu colonization. Many Christian missionaries are of course present in the

region. But a conversion to Christianity does not necessarily imply a renunciation of the belief in the effectiveness of the *jhãkri*. Communists also consult *jhãkri*.

56. Girls are subject to being carried off by Athanne-Nayādeutā or by the *ban ko burheni* that we shall see further on. The girls adore these *burheni* as *deutā*. After the kidnapping and return home, a girl is trained by a male *guru* who is himself a *jhãkri*. There were some *bijwāmi* around Kalimpong, one particularly at the 13th mile along the road to Pedong; but I did not know any well. It should be noted that, according to Turner (1931), a *jhãkrini* means 'wife of a *jhãkri*' and not a female *jhãkri*. This definition seems inaccurate to me.

57. *Rittai* 'empty-handed', *Lāṭo*, 'stupid, simple,' *sun* 'golden'. *Sun* also means 'the number zero' in Nepali , but this meaning is not appropriate to the context. *Laṭhe*: (Turner 1931, 'a stalwart fellow'). *Bhairab*, 'formidable'. Bhairab is also an epithet and a form of Śiva. *Bālakha* means 'young child'. Since this *ban jhãkri* is the youngest of the brothers, the possible spelling *balla* should not be excluded. My informants in general proved to be quite vague concerning the exact spelling of the spirits' names.

I gathered other accounts concerning the first master and his pupil. Here are two of them. 1) Mahādeo was alone on the Kailasparbat. Satyadevi, his first wife, had committed suicide by fire, and Pārvati was not living with the god. Mahādeo decided that he could no longer personally take care of all the inhabitants of the world. He therefore pulled three hairs from the right side of his head and from these three hairs, he created seven *jhãkri*. At the same time, he pulled three hairs from the left side of his head and from these three hairs he created the three goddesses Bhadrakāli, Mahākāli and Candikālī. These three goddesses help men who are tormented by sorcerers. Having created the *jhãkri*, Mahādeo taught them *mantra-tantra* and the various *jhãkri* techniques. Then he sent them into the world. He did not send them to precise places, but scattered them about in the East, South, West and North, on the banks of rivers, on high mountains, in dense forests, everywhere that life was dangerous. The three goddesses, on the other hand, were sent to the plains and Mahādeo gave them only rudrāccemālā. 2) Ban - , Laṭhe - , Sun - , Sailuṅ - , Rittai - jhãkri were born simultaneously at Raktakosi on the Sailundhara. The parents of these five brothers were Raktabijuwā and Raktabijwāmi, who died the moment their children were born. The children, protected by Kalabhairun, managed to survive by drinking the milk of the river Dudhpokhri. Mahādeo created them because he could no longer take care of all the men he had formerly created; he pro-

jected his *ātman* in them and they automatically became *jhãkri*. Kālabhairun helped them make their *ḍhyāṅro*. In the jungle, they found the *jhãkrikāth*, the *riṭṭho*, the *rudrācche* and what they needed for their instruments. Once they had made their *mālā* they called Sivaji and obtained his power. Then they separated. Rittai-jhãkri stayed in Sailundhara; Sun-jhãkri went to an area where there are gold mines; Ban-jhãkri, the eldest of the five, left for the jungle. From that time on, when men were sick or in difficulty, the *jhãkri* came to their aid.

58. These are not the only necklaces Gobind Prasad uses. There is also the *deuṅiale* made of bamboo (Turner 1931:344: *niṅalo* = *Arundinaria inter-media*). This is a small necklace painted red. When he is in conflict with other *jhãkri* Gobind Prasad wears it to protect himself from his adversary's *deutā*. He also has an iron necklace called *kalsāṅlo* (?kal = quarrel + *sāṅlo* = 'small chain'). When a client is troubled by attacks from a *boksi*, Gobind Prasad wears the *kalsāṅlo* around his neck, then takes it off and puts it around the neck of his client. The latter then begins to talk and state his identity. Finally, there is the *candan-mālā* which protects the lamp *(diyo)* next to which is placed a wild boar's tooth during certain *pūjā*. This necklace is made of 108 pieces of *candan*, sandalwood.

59. *Bhure* means 'young person' and *burhi* means 'old (person)'. There is some uncertainty concerning the spelling of this word: it is because there is not always agreement as to these ladies' ages.

60. *Laṭṭe* means 'tangled hair'. Cf. TP, XLVIII, 4-5, 1960, p.458-459 (editor's note: we were unable to trace this reference and give it as in the French original).

61. *Seti* means 'white'.

62. Cf. Chamung Sikāri.

63. *Knuṭ* means 'traces'; *khuṭṭā khuṭṭai* 'by foot'.

64. *Thāṅne* means 'dressed in rags, dirty'; this is an adjective often applied by Nepalese to Tibetans.

65. *Phurluṅ* means 'a small basket', and *bagālinu*, 'to group together'. It must be a type of horn of plenty, a basket from which one takes everything he needs.

66. Turner (1931:7b): 'Fixed, permanent; epithet of God'.

67. Turner (1931:622a) indicates: 'a particular kind of demon'.

He wonders if this is a borrowed word of Tibetan origin, *sog-po* in Tibetan meaning 'mongol'; but the comparison does not appear imperative. A derivation of the Nepali *sok*, Newāri *sok* and *sog* meaning 'sadness' is not to be ignored. The folkloric themes grouped around *sok-pa* are almost the same as those that surround the 'yeti'. Gobind Prasad carried a *sok-pa*'s finger bone to protect himself against *boksi*.

68. Certain *jhãkri* sacrifice cocks, others never kill. This difference is not a function of caste. I have often felt it would be possible to establish a distinction between 'black' *jhãkri* and 'white' *jhãkri*, but such a distinction would be a construction of the Western mind and would not correspond with native thought.

69. I will then provide information concerning the pharmacoepia of the *jhãkri*.

70. Concerning Observatory Hill, see (Murray 1955:314). This spot is today invaded by tourists, whereas the site at Senchal, more remote, outside the town, is a more frequent site of *pūjāri*.

71. One says *gupha pasnu*. This phrase, applied to men, means, according to Turner (1931), 'to live apart as before marriage or after death'.

72. That is, the full moon of the *janaĩ*. *Janaĩ* is the sacred thread worn by the three upper castes. This is the same time as the *Rikhi-tarpani* mentioned above. See my article (Macdonald 1972:73-80).

73. There is a curious notion in Moorcroft (Moorcroft and Trebeck 1841:165): 'The mountain of Gogar is famous for a fierce conflict which is said to take place on it annually, beginning on the 20th of Bhadon (August-September) between the Deotas or wizards and Dains or witches who assembled from far and near, even from Bengal and the Dekhin.' This should be considered in the light of what I said above concerning the relationship between the *jhãkri* and *ojhā*.

74. Maṅsir is our December-January. The monthly *pūjā* costs approximately 8 rupees. The expenses for the *gurupūjā* are considerably higher, since the *thān* constructed on this occasion is often costly, due to its size and the amount of food and offerings it entails. When it is done properly, it costs approximately 30 rupees. Naturally the figure varies. The people concerned contribute according to their means, and by pooling their resources manage to meet the expenses. I do not think that the *jhãkri* activity is of much

importance in the economy of these populations. The *jhãkri*, it seems to me, is not very demanding insofar as payment of his services is concerned: with regard to this question, my information is different from that of my predecessors who considered the *jhãkri* as a rapacious person.

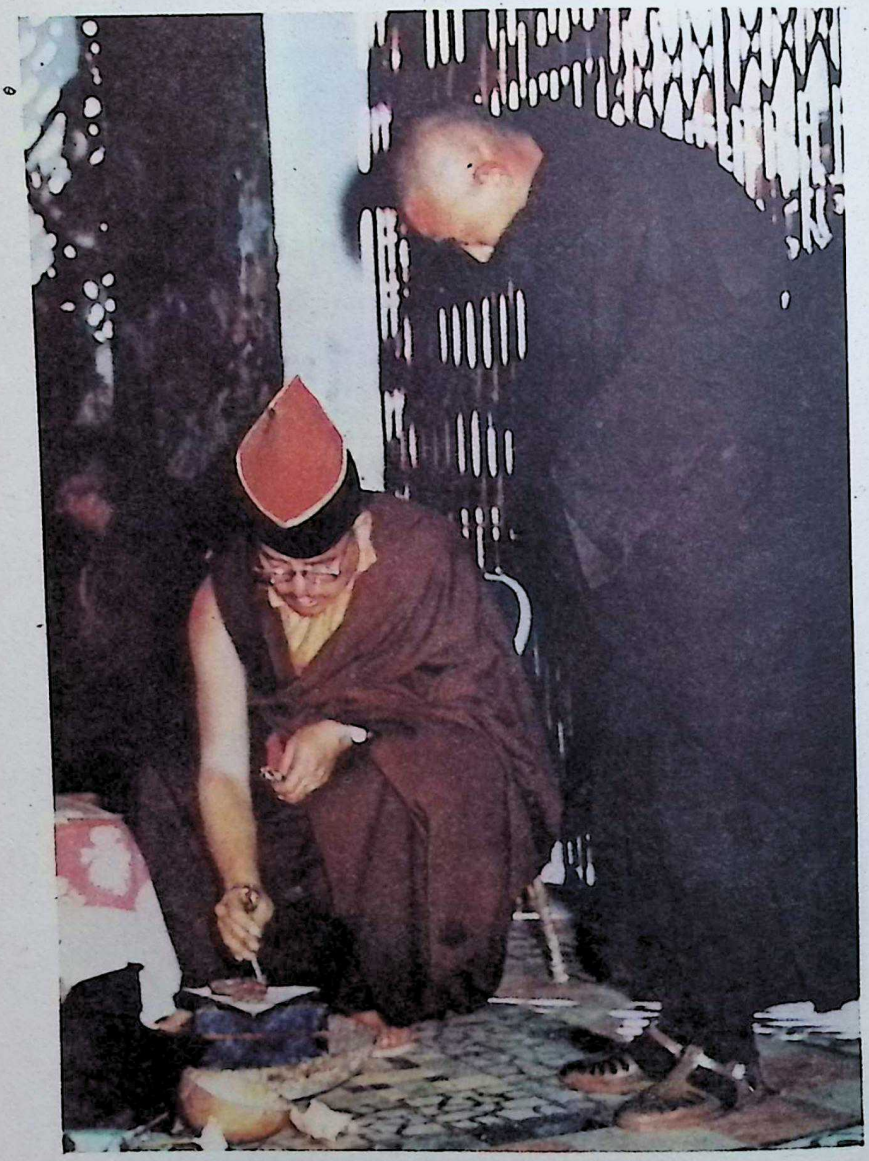
75. The 'lives' of the deities illustrate, in a striking manner, this basic fact. Athanne-Nayādeutā seems very poorly considered by those other than the Rai or Limbu. But it is difficult to specify the couple known by the name Nayādeutā. Here is a biography. Kṛṣṇa was bathing one day in the upper part of the river Brahmapoutre. From the dirt of her body the couple Baji-Bajai was formed. This couple remained in the river bed for 84 years, worshipping Kṛṣṇa Bhagawān. Then the god told them to go out into the world; wherever they would go, they would be worshipped. They therefore went to Tibet where they stayed for 50 years; they are known there by the names Narubon and Chaurubon. Sometimes they were seen as spirits, sometimes as men. Then they went to Nindrawadiban in the Mahācina. There they ate only roots. The king of the forest, who was hunting, captured them. They had taken on the appearance of a boy and girl; the king arrested them because they were strangers, and he kept them in prison for 12 years. One year after their arrest, the people of this land began to die after illnesses that lasted eight or nine days. The 64 types of disease spread throughout the land, but no one could recognize them. This state of affairs lasted eleven years; then one day the king understood in a dream that he had been wrong in arresting the couple, and that his countrymen must pay homage to the couple. He therefore released them and asked them what they wanted. They answered: 'We want to be masters *(adhipati)* of the forests in the North of Nepal', and they asked the king to give each one of them a sickle, a basket and a sack. They then went to the land of Kirat, where the Yakhā then lived. There they took two fish: they had taken on the appearance of an old man and woman of about sixty years of age. The inhabitants of the land did not allow them to eat the fish. That evening, the river overflowed. The leader of the land, who was called Chaitahan, was 'possessed' by the couple. He began to say, 'You did not allow us to eat the fish for you did not know us. We are the *deutā* of the forest.' At midnight, Chaitahan made them offerings (five pair of fish) and asked their pardon. The same night, the level of the river fell. The couple, in the form of a 12-year-old boy and girl, said: 'In the future you must give us offerings of fish and edible roots (*kanda-mūl*, Turner 1931:726) twice a year in the months of Baisākh and Mansir,' The couple then went to Nepal (most probably to the villages of Katmandu Valley). The inhabitants of this land, the Newari, were cloth-weavers, and the couple

asked for work, but being strangers, they got none. Once more there was flooding; the causes were discovered, and the Newari (they are sometimes called *Kusuṇḍo*, Turner 1931, q.v.) decided to give them a bi-annual *pūjā* in Baisakh and Maṅsir. From there, the couple went to the land of the Limbu, where they assumed the form of a buffalo. The Limbu, uncultivated jungle people, did not understand that they were dealing with *deutā*; they killed the buffalo and ate it, with the exception of the lungs, heart and liver, that they hung from a tree. When the Limbu ate the meat, they became crazy. Namrun, leader of the Limbu, was possessed by the couple. He said: 'They killed us for nothing, without understanding who we are. Our life is in our lungs, heart and liver, that they have not yet eaten. Take them away, and when they begin to move, dig a hole at the place you're standing.' They dug at the spot indicated and found a box full of silver ornaments. When they saw these ornaments, the countrymen understood that they were dealing with *deutā* and not buffalo. Henceforth, they worshipped them twice a year. Other people settling in the land afterwards followed the Limbus' example and also worshipped them. Next stop: Benares, where a girl called Nāgesori, possessed by the couple, explained to the Bihāri the necessity of worshipping them. The Bihāri complied by making offerings of fruit, candy, etc. Then the couple left towards the East, in the region of Manipur (Assam). It is in the East that they were worshipped in the name of Purbiyā Athanne and given offerings of 8 *annas*. In Modes, where the couple went next, they were worshipped with offerings of poultry. In Darjeeling, *pūjā* are made to the couple under the name of Nayādeutā: a cock is offered. The Moslems in Darjeeling, to be on the safe side, also pay homage to these *deutā*.

76. Cf. for instance the passage of Tāranātha concerning Kāṇha to which Mr. Snellgrove (1959:9) has recently drawn our attention.

77. P. Pelliotta (1912:351-430). For a comparison of Taoist and Tantric sexual techniques, see R. H. Van Gulik (1961: 339-359).

PART IV
SPIRIT POSSESSION AND THE LITERATE TRADITION



'I am Mahākāla', symbolised by the red and black hat donned in every Mahākāla ritual where an enemy effigy is decimated

XVII

REINCARNATION RECONSIDERED - OR THE REINCARNATE LAMA AS SHAMAN

Introduction

In this paper on reincarnation in Tibetan society, I intend to explore a type of spirit possession that occurs among a class of priests conspicuous in Tibetan Buddhism as lama *(bla.ma.)* or *tulku (sprul.sku.)*. In examining the nature and role of this unusual figure in the wider context of spirit possession in Nepal, it may be possible to extend our understanding of shamanism and spirit possession and to begin a more sociological inquiry into the phenomenon of the Tibetan reincarnate lama.

The characteristic feature of the Tibetan lama, which conforms to the concept central to shamanism, is that an individual becomes an incarnate form of a deity[1] and then performs religious services in that capacity for members of his community. If we acknowledge that there is an analogy here, we are led to reconsider the nature and status of the reincarnate lama on the one hand and to expand our notion of spirit possession on the other. I propose here to try to clarify the nature of reincarnation as manifest through the lama or *tulku*, approaching the subject sociologically. The metaphysical and historical aspects of Tibetan reincarnation are too complicated to be discussed in this brief paper, but some suggestions and material on the social aspects of Tibetan reincarnation can serve to introduce some questions for further consideration.

Although the Tibetan *tulku* or lama is a well-known figure, having been widely documented in accounts of Tibetan history and culture, the subject has never been treated analytically as a religious phenomenon or as a sociological institution. The system of lama incarnation has not been linked to the more general theories of rebirth or incarnation. Rather, in a manner all too typical of our treatment of Tibetan culture, this practice has only been understood as a unique historical phenomenon.

First we must identify where the impasse lies, for only then will we be able to begin our reconsideration.

Hitherto shamanism in Tibet had been associated with ancient practices, particularly linked to the supposedly pre-Buddhist Bon

religion. Some forms of Tibetan shamanism were brought to our attention by Eliade (1964) in his important review of archaic techniques of ecstasy. In that source Eliade made extensive reference to Tibetan practices. He discussed the symbolism of the bone, drum and magical flight found in a variety of Tibetan contexts and identified the Bonpo priests, the *pawo* and *nyen.jomo* mediums, and the oracles as shamanic. At one point in his discussion, there is a reference to 'Bon shaman'. Other detailed accounts of Tibetan ritual practices, especially Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956), provide extensive evidence of the shamanic elements in Tibetan religion. However, those shamanic elements were generally linked with something in the past or in decline, and most discussions of the later Buddhist aspects of Tibetan religion are almost devoid of any reference to shamanism. I think there is a general assumption that shamanic practices are now represented only by remnants. There has also been an inability to reconcile ancient shamanic themes such as spirit possession with the system of ascetic theology characteristic of Tibetan Buddhism. Eliade himself hesitated in his more complete investigations of Tibetan religion and finally suggested a re-evaluation of those differences. At one point Eliade (1964:440-44) writes with conviction that '... the very notion of the soul - which is fundamental to shamanic ideology - changes its meaning completely in consequence of the Buddhist critique.' He then continues to say that 'to whatever extent Lamaism is a regression in comparison with the great Buddhist metaphysical tradition, it was impossible for it to return to a realistic (sic) concept of the 'soul''. For him, 'this one point suffices to distinguish the various contents of a Lamaist technique from those of a shamanic technique.' Although at the time, such a view may have precluded further investigation, it seems to me that an invitation for others to consider the change and development of shamanic practices in Tibetan religion are now in order. But first we must look seriously at other forms of spirit possession and assume that ascetic theology and shamanic themes are compatible.

If one were to limit one's understanding of shamanism to the classical Arctic examples in which the inspired priest ascends to another world and in the course of his journeys has encounters with various gods, then perhaps Buddhism cannot be accommodated into the older although extant forms of Tibetan shamanism.[2] However, I would follow Lewis (1971:49-52) in extending the definition of shamanic beliefs and actions to include spirit possession by 'the descent of the gods to man'.[3] I would even go further and accept Lewis' (1971:127-131)[4] argument that cults of spirit possession can be incorporated and accommodated within an established religious tradition such as Islam, Protestantism or Buddhism. If the incarnation system operating between a deity and *tulku* can for the present be considered spirit possession by 'the descent of the gods to man', or some similar process, then the reincarnate lama can be seriously considered in the context

of this wider definition of shamanism. Indeed, in doing so, we may uncover some suggestions as to its links with other types of shamanic practices in Tibet and elsewhere. This does not preclude our seeing it as some para-shamanic form that has developed out of earlier Tibetan or Central Asian practices.

Field material presented in the following pages is based on my personal experiences among communities of Tibetan lama. I visited their religious centres in north India and studied with them in several Buddhist areas of Nepal where newly-arrived Tibetans share a flourishing monastic culture with the longer-settled Sherpa and Bhotia peoples.[5] The culture I shall be discussing in the following pages does not refer to early history nor is it confined to Tibet. It is a Tibetan tradition, particularly associated with the Tibetan religion, which still exists today throughout the Himalayas, particularly in Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and parts of India where Tibetan people are settled. Most of my observations come from Nepal and India and extend over a period of 7 years between 1963 and 1971. During that time I was in regular contact with the reincarnate lama and Tibetan religious centres of the areas. Some of those lama are heads of their own monasteries and enjoy the following of thousands of laity and clerics; others lead quiet meditative lives, while others are more scholarly. In the normal course of their worldly existence these lama age and die whereupon, in accordance with the law of *karma*, they are reborn. This particular rationale of rebirth or reincarnation helps to arrange and assure their continuity in the role and figure of a lama. Thus, today there is still a significantly large population of reincarnate lama to be found, in spite of the tragic and tumultuous destruction of the relgious system within Tibet in recent years. After fleeing from Tibet, many settled among people of a similar faith who continued to hold a respect for Tibetan Buddhism. In this way the reincarnate lama have re-established themselves, and the entire set of beliefs and practices associated with them persists and is continually being rejuvenated. In my sustained contact with these communities, I observed the appearance of child lama and noted their entry into the educative and religious system. Furthermore, I was given every indication that the practices I witnessed follow very much along traditional lines. For these reasons the system I describe below can be usefully applied to our understanding of what existed in Tibet prior to the takeover as well as to the system that continues to operate in the Tibetan Buddhist part of the Himalaya.

The concept and practice of reincarnation

The Tibetan lama is a figure well known among people interested in Tibet and familiar with its history and religion. He is frequently and most dramatically exemplified by the Dalai Lama, the politico-religious leader of the Tibetan Buddhists. However,

it is wrong to think of this system of reincarnation as exclusively associated with political office or monastic leadership. Figures such as the Dalai Lama, Panchen Lama, and Karmapa Lama, have immense power and esteem, but they are only the top three of hundreds of reincarnate lama living today. I estimate that about two hundred such figures live within this tradition today. In Nepal I identified no fewer than thirty-one Tibetan and Sherpa lama (nine in the Kathmandu valley and twenty-one in the northeastern areas); there are reported to be more than forty lama in Sikkim, Bhutan and Ladakh. At present the greatest number seems to be in India, probably about one hundred, all of whom have moved there from Tibet after 1959. Increasing numbers are now residing in Europe and America, where they are finding new followings among scholars and acolytes. As far as I know, all these lama are males with the exception of a female incarnate, a Sikkimese girl.

In Tibetan the reincarnate lama is usually referred to as *'tulku'*, although lama and yangtse *(yang.tshe.)*[6] are frequently used. Another term, *'rin.po.che'* meaning 'precious one' is a common form of reference and address. Lama, *yangtshe* and *rinpoche* however are sometimes applied to other individuals; *'tulku'* refers exclusively to the special feature of reincarnation and is therefore the most appropriate term to use in the present context. According to Das (1970:812) a 'sprul-sku' is: '... an incarnate being, generally a lama; a person in whom the emanation of some deity or bygone saint is present in an 'occult' manner. A lama thus possessed is styled a *tulku* and usually occupies some high office to which only the particular individual into which the emanation has passed can succeed ...'. *'Tulku'* is most frequently translated as 'emanation body', which indeed denotes the special quality of spirit possession which I am suggesting is characteristic of the reincarnate lama.[7] A similar, still limited, explanation is provided by Blofeld in his discussion of the particularities of the Vajrayana Buddhism practiced by Tibetan and Mongolian peoples. He notes the prevalence of the *'tulku'* in the system and briefly describes them as follows: 'tulkus are ... recognized incarnations of departed dignitaries. Elsewhere even Buddhists find this strange (although) ... all of them accept the fact of reincarnation as a matter of course ... The Tibetans hold that a lama far advanced along the path is able to choose the circumstances of his next reincarnation, and before his death, foretells where his birth will take place ...' (Blofeld 1970:4-2).

Because of the eminence of certain *tulku* and their role in Tibetan history, one finds frequent reference to them in the literature on Tibet, and a few detailed accounts of individual *tulku* are now available in English. A well-known spiritual leader in America today is Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, the 11th Trungpa Tulku, who fortunately provides us with a well-written autobiographical history of his early life as a reincarnate (Trungpa 1966). Thupten Jigme Norbu is another author-*tulku* who records his personal feel-

ings about his reincarnate state and also provides us with details about his famous brother, the Dalai Lama (Norbu and Turnbull 1969). A few accounts of reincarnate lama in Nepal are available, and we can expect to have more autobiographical information in the future since many Tibetan texts written by Tibetan *tulku* are now being translated and made available to us. It is a tradition in Tibetan literature for *tulku* to write accounts of their present lives as well as that of their spiritual forebears.

The histories of *tulku* I have known in Nepal and India follow much the same pattern of incarnation, discovery, enthronement and training as outlined by Chögyam Trungpa and Thupten Norbu in their autobiographies. The elaborate metaphysical principle underlying all these incarnations in Tibetan religion is a vast subject that will have to be elucidated elsewhere. However, for the purposes of this paper, the process can be briefly understood as follows: Reincarnation is a form of rebirth consistent with the karmic view of existence that is central to Tibetan Buddhism. This particular elaboration, called Mahāyāna Buddhism, holds that men and divinities destined for Buddahood reject total enlightenment in order to return to the world of sentient beings and help other men along the slow path of salvation. In order to do this, some take human form, moving from one body to another in a continual series of predestined rebirths. Since any such deity transcends human existence when a person in whom it is manifest dies, it enters another, usually a male child.[8] There it remains throughout the individual's human existence, and when he in turn dies, the deity is again free to emanate in another infant. This can go on for an unlimited number of generations. The present Dalai Lama is the 14th in a series of reincarnations, emanations of the Boddhisattva Chenresig *(spyan.ras.gzigs)*; the Karmapa is the 16th in his line, and as already noted, Trungpa is the 11th. Those *tulku* I met in Nepal and India are of much younger lineages, some no more than two or three generations, and one I know to have appeared in Nepal recently is the first incarnation of an exceptionally compassionate monk who died in 1969.

There are a number of distinctive features about this type of spirit possession such as its duration in one human body throughout a normal lifetime or its appearance at the childhood stage of its human vehicle and its dual manifestations, that of the deity and that of its preceding incarnate being or its serial nature occurring over a number of successive rebirths to create a line of teachers. The resulting kind of spirit possession is in contrast with what is generally understood as shamanic possession in which the human, usually an adult, voluntarily and on special occasions only assumes the incarnate state. In the sense in which it occurs, the Tibetan form of reincarnation may be described as involuntary, the child exerting no choice in the matter. However, the person possessed is not so completely overcome that his own personality and mind are consumed or dispossessed by the deity.

He does not surrender his own personality for short periods of time as does the shaman while under the power of a deity. Indeed, the Tibetan *tulku* remains in a highly controlled state of unity with the deity, and that is perhaps what initially allows reincarnation to proceed in this predestined manner. Ideally, the individual is only a vehicle whose existence is totally concerned with promoting the noble aims of the deity. In some cases, however, the individual person is not so inclined. In these cases the deity remains in a state of abeyance, its work inhibited by the human vehicle upon which for that period of time it is dependent. Whatever accommodation is made between the deity and the individual, there is always a recognition of two elements co-existing. How the Tibetan devotee perceives and separates the two roles is not yet clear and might constitute the subject of another investigation dealing with several associated metaphysical problems. Some suggestion of the conflict that can occur between a man and his assigned emanation is presented by Norbu in his personal account. Evidence from a variety of cases observed in Nepal show that the degree to which harmony may be achieved between a *tulku* and his deity varies from one instance to another. Moreover, within the *tulku*'s lifetime, his role in religious matters may change from one stage of his development to another. There are occasions when, although the community recognizes one of their members to be a new *tulku*, the child and his parents do not respond appropriately, and rather than undertake his assigned religious role, the boy will be brought up as a layman. Unless a *tulku* serves the deity, he incarnates through involvement in religious exercises and the application of his spiritual powers.

In such cases the deity remains latent and unfulfilled for the duration of that *tulku*'s human existence. But the deity may become active again when the individual dies and emanate in another body. I have heard that it is possible for a deity formerly incarnated to eventually be released completely from the cycle of reincarnation and so cease to be manifest as a *tulku*. These variations raise interesting metaphysical questions, but for the present I can only deal with the more sociological aspects of what happens when reincarnation occurs. Turning our attention now to the matter of the discovery and recruitment of *tulku*, we can gain some additional insights into this form of spirit possession.

Recruitment

An incarnate lama, before he expires, may give a general indication of the circumstances in which his emanation will reappear. He is often pressed to do so by his followers and other sentient beings who require his spiritual leadership. After his death then, on the assumption that their request will be met, a *tulku*'s closest devotees begin to search for his reincarnation. Supernatural signs are given indicating the place and conditions of his

rebirth. These may be directed through a dream by a devotee or kinsman of the recently deceased *(khong.ma)*. The first signal is sometimes received by the parent of the new reincarnate, or by the child himself who may utter words indicating a consciousness with either the *khong.ma* or with the deity. Such a child, it is said, begins reciting passages from religious texts and chanting prayers at the age of three or four, long before he could be taught to read under normal circumstances. Such utterances are said to be expressions of the experiences and knowledge remembered from previous lives. I have heard reports of infant *tulku* instructing their mothers not to pamper or play with them, but to worship them as lama. Another common indication of incarnate behaviour in children is their enjoyment and attraction for ritual objects rather than ordinary toys; they can also recognize the ritual items and other belongings of their *khong.ma* which they then inherit. Child *tulku* are said to have this amazing ability to identify texts and articles. They can also remember people known in previous lives: a friend, a teacher, a sibling, or a pupil. When this happens, the relationship continues, although the persons in whom they are manifest are now in different age and social situations. Some of the situations I have been discussing here are exemplified in the case of Karo Lama of Khumbu in Nepal. His reincarnation occurred while I was resident in the area, so I was fortunately able to learn some details of the event.

In 1964, after arriving in Nepal from Dingri in Tibet, a devout monk named Karo established a small new monastery for a few monks and nuns who had been studying with him in Tibet. After only a few years in Nepal his following had grown to include both Tibetans and Sherpas living in the area who had come to love and respect him. Although he had not been a *tulku* himself, because of his immense piety and compassion his devotees anticipated his return, after his death in 1969, in incarnate form. They placed his corpse in the appropriate position, performed rituals to facilitate the return, and began to search throughout the area for his reincarnation. His devoted following of monks and nuns were distraught but hopeful, and in the course of their search, they asked another local *tulku*, a visiting Sherpa named Paldon Lama, to indicate to them if and where their lama might reappear.

Paldon Lama, only twenty-one years old himself but with renowned powers of visition, meditated on the matter and indeed received a vision indicating where the rebirth had occurred. Following the signs given by Paldon Lama, the monks went to a neighbouring village and found a two-year-old child, who upon closer examination was found to have clear signs of being Karo's incarnation. Details of the boy's astrology were then sent to another prestigious lama in the vicinity who, although he had not visited the child, employed his powers of vision and confirmed that the infant was indeed Karo Lama incarnated. This was not disputed, but the traditional procedures in such matters required ratification from higher religious

authorities, so details of the case were sent to the Dalai Lama's office. Final confirmation was undisputed by the local population. There was no jubilation or other apparent expression of delight generated among local people when they learned about the discovery. News of the matter spread slowly through the region without much comment. It seemed to me that people were reluctant to accept the matter as final at that early stage, but it may have been simply that nothing had to be done for the time being. When I met the boy's father just after the discovery, he was hesitant to commit himself on the matter and replied that the identification had still to be confirmed by higher authorities.

Every lama's history will be slightly different from that of another. *Tulku* are not a clearly defined class of beings and the supernatural nature of their recruitment can be as diverse as the material conditions surrounding them. Here is another case, told to me by the *tulku* himself, during one of our long conversations when I visited him in the elegant chamber of his newly constructed monastery in Nepal. Shi.tru Tulku is the name I ascribe to this most gracious man. He is now fifty years old, having moved to Nepal almost fifteen years ago from Dingri in Tibet. He was born near central Tibet, the illegitimate child of the daughter of a devout and prosperous family. The girl had had an encounter with an itinerant monk and fell pregnant, but she remained unmarried, at home, and gave birth to this boy. A very pious person, she was able to perceive when the boy was still an infant that he possessed exceptional qualities and began to remember a visit some time before by a very holy yogi called Shi.tru. This same yogi had spent some years in Dingri at Tsarong monastery with his disciple the Tsarong Lama. In 1924, after this yogi's death, he was reincarnated in the child of this woman. When Tsarong Lama heard that his teacher had expired, he anticipated his rebirth. On hearing of this woman and her child, he called on her and requested that she bring the boy to him at Tsarong. An inspiring story is recounted of how the girl, with the five-year-old reincarnate Shi.tru on her back, undertook the long journey from her home to Tsarong. Apparently the Tsarong Lama, after performing set tests to identify the boy, soon confirmed that the child was indeed the incarnation of his yogi teacher. He then invited him to stay in the monastery where for the following ten years he trained the young man in those traditions he himself had been taught by Shi.tru *khong.ma*. The woman herself never married nor did she return to her home. She remained with her son in the monastery.[9] When the son became more independent, she took vows to become a nun and moved into the nunnery adjacent to the Tsarong monastery. The boy's father also heard about the matter and came to Tsarong to live near his son, whereupon he too took vows and settled in the monastery as a monk. He died many years ago, but Shi.tru's mother, now eighty-nine, is still alive and remains with her son to this day, sharing the devotion and prestige accruing to him by his newly enlarged following in Nepal. While the *tulku* is presently occupied in teaching

and managing his active monastery, she spends her time in quiet meditation and prayer. Since his enthronement she has lived as a nun, treating him as her lama and teacher.

It is not uncommon for parents of a high status *tulku* to become very religious themselves and to lead celibate pious lives in service and devotion to their son. Of course this develops out of their recognition of him as an incarnate; and they cease thinking of him as their son and begin treating him as their personal lama. I should add that the mother of a *tulku* usually enjoys increased prestige, even more than does the father. Occasionally, a woman will conceive two or three *tulku*. Such women are very exceptional and are awarded a high place in the society, amounting almost to sanctity. The Dalai Lama's mother is such a figure, having conceived three high *tulku*. I also know of another woman now living in Nepal whose three sons are all *tulku*. These young boys are now seven, nine, and fifteen years old. Their father is not highly regarded due to some personal situations he has entered, but local people express great deference to the mother of these *tulku*. When I met her, I also felt she emanated an air of exceptional peace and grace. She, like the mother of any *tulku*, is addressed by the title, *yum.sku.zhabs*.[10]

The socio-economic class or caste of the *tulku* is not fixed by tradition. Although no members of the *yawa* outcaste people may become lama of any kind, succession is open to all others. Young incarnates are discovered among humble peasants as well as in lofty noble households. The incarnate may be the child of a nomad, a farmer, a trader or the son of a married priest. There is no restriction exercised by any school or sect of Tibetan Buddhism; all traditions have incarnates of this kind. Sometimes a member of the marrying *tulku* tradition, a *tulku* himself, may have a son who is recognized as the incarnate of another lama. Two personally known of are such a father and son. Both of them are *tulku*. The boy is Dripon Tulku, the reincarnate of Dripon, who died in Dingri in 1959. His father, Apho Rinpoche, is a married reincarnate lama. Apho is the incarnation of his own father's brother. Apho Khongma was a well-known spiritual leader in south Tibet. This line of succession is not so uncommon. One occasionally finds the *tulku* of a deceased man among his own kinsmen. It may be his grandson, his brother's son (as in the case of Apho), or his sister's son. It may also appear from within an intimate group of the deceased lama's devotees. For example, Karo Tulku, born in 1969, is the child of a man and woman who had formerly been monk and nun in Karo Lama's monastery. Even though the couple had broken their vows of celibacy while living in his centre and had to leave in shame when she fell pregnant, this act of faith occurred.

The Training and Service of a tulku

The task of a *tulku* is generally defined by the Buddhist concept of a deity taking human form in order to carry out the noble task of leading man towards enlightenment. Within that general framework, however, there are numerous ways a *tulku* may comport himself. Any one of several different religious traditions may be followed by a *tulku*. He may be a member of any one of the several sub-sects in the four major schools of Tibetan religion. And within any of these traditions he may follow the life either of a celibate or of a married man. If celibate, he may be a reclused yogi or take up membership in a monastic community, usually as its leader. I know of one case, a lama just outside Kathmandu, who is a married *tulku* yet the residents in his small centre are all celibate nuns. Karo Lama (mentioned earlier) headed a small community of nuns in Tibet, but when he moved to Nepal he had both celibate nuns and monks with him. Yogi *tulku*, like other yogi, usually live in solitude, but sometimes they reside in a monastic centre and teach for short periods of time. This was the tradition followed by the predecessors of two *tulku* named Shitru and Dripon, mentioned above.

Celibate *tulku* who head monastic communities usually hold the office of abbot *(mkhan.po)*. By virtue of their incarnate status they succeed to the monastic office as well. They also have the obligation to continue their predecessors' task of saving other mortals through teaching and ritual performance. Those boys who become incarnates of previous monastic leaders succeed to the office of abbot of those centres. They also inherit the private estate and public following the former abbot may have held. Whether or not a *tulku* takes up his designated rights and duties is up to him and his parents. There are a few monasteries in Nepal where the designated *tulku* in the present generation has elected to take advantage of new political and economic opportunities of the modern nation and in so doing rejects his religious role. The present *tulku* of Takshingdu monastery, Chiwong monastery, and Dolaka monastery have not resided in their monasteries or offered any religious leadership.[11] Although the *tulku* of Takshingdu was taken to the monastery at the age of seven and enthroned in a memorable public ceremony, he returned to his parents' home shortly thereafter and has not taken up religious study or shown any further interest in his monastery. His family now sends him to school in Kathmandu and does not want to discuss the boy's religious obligations. However, the monks and nuns of Takshingdu still hope the boy will return to them and they maintain his residence and throne in anticipation. Meanwhile no other reincarnate lama can claim the leadership of that monastery.

Since one of the means by which a *tulku* takes up his noble work is through religious instruction and ritual performance, it is necessary for him to study the liturgy and acquire a thorough knowledge of the Dharma. His authority, although it is inherited

through the system of spiritual succession, is strengthened and made operable by his access to sacred texts and techniques. Among all the Tibetan Buddhist scholars, it is usually the reincarnate lama who are the most highly trained and capable body of religious authorities. The responsibility for the tradition lies with them, and they are given special training and expected to reach a higher standard than others. Their careful training from boyhood combined with rigorous discipline and exceptional intelligence usually produces highly articulate and accomplished young men who can take the position thrust upon them. Generally, they pursue this life with devotion and with the sense that they are continuing a tradition and task set by earlier generations.

By the time they reach the age of twenty, most *tulku*, if they have been pursuing their religious ideals, are thoroughly conversant with ritual procedures and Tibetan literature. One rarely finds a layman or regular monk of similar age having the same degree of knowledge and achievement. A *tulku* will also have learned many ritual skills such as consecration, benediction, initiation, divination, and purification, which he must perform as a religious leader. He will be expected to give lectures and enter into academic discourses as a young man. Monks and nuns as well as lay devotees will request teaching from him. Even a child *tulku* five or six years old will begin presiding over ceremonies and bestowing blessings on those who come to him with faith in his magical powers. That he is but a child makes no difference to them. I have seen a boy of seven sit enthroned for several hours continuously while hundreds of devotees file past to receive the blessing of his touch. On another occasion, when a three-year-old infant *tulku* carried on his mother's shoulders was approached by other travellers on the path, those adults passing bowed in deference while the baby extended his hand in blessing. The responsibilities of leadership, however, do not effectively overtake the young *tulku* for some time. He spends his first twenty or thirty years studying with various teachers and travelling to religious centres as well as enjoying some of the pleasures of boyhood and family life.[12]

The training of a *tulku* is to some extent defined by the nature of his rebirth. He will be directed according to the tradition developed and espoused by his spiritual predecessors. It is usually the chief disciple of his immediate predecessor who becomes a *tulku*'s teacher, ensuring that the tradition moves directly from one incarnate to the next, but the intervention of a disciple in such an interregnum can alter the tradition. The *tulku* himself may develop the teaching according to his own inclinations or historical situation. After early training with his first teacher, a *tulku* is free to study at any other religious centre and in any of the Tibetan religious traditions or schools. Thus, between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five a *tulku* is not usually found residing in his own monastery; it is likely he will be in another

region altogether studying with other masters of ritual and liturgy. During this training period a *tulku*'s local followers excuse his absence with the feeling that he will return to serve them after acquiring greater knowledge.

It is equally important for a *tulku* to learn magico-religious techniques as well as textual traditions. Magico-religious services are in constant demand among his following which includes clerics as well as laymen. A *tulku* employs both textually defined techniques and those he develops with his growing widsom, ingenuity and sense of compassion. Most important seems to be the *tulku*'s inherent power, sometimes referred to as *'rtsa.chen.po'*, and this is what distinguishes him from other religious practitioners. *Tulku* are believed to possess exceptional powers of vision and control over malevolent forces. This provides them with the insight and healing power that ordinary mortals do not possess. The possession of such powers by a *tulku* is part of what generates the interest and following he enjoys. This following grows as his success in healing and divining increases and his power becomes more manifest. Not all *tulku* are attributed the same success and skill in these matters. Laymen make constant demands on them. Sometimes a layman will consult three lama on a particular matter. They are discriminating and can see where one lama is more capable than another in ritual matters. No doubt politico-economic factors could account for the disparity in popularity and ability of one lama over another, but one must also take into consideration the manifested spiritual powers of each.

Tulku employ few additional paraphernalia in the course of their religious work. They don no special clothing, and their rituals for healing and divination are kept relatively simple. Some lama cast die, others bones, and many prefer to count beads in a particular exercise called *'mo'*. After any one of these divinatory exercises, the lama consults an astrological calendar or other text, and then prescribes the course of action the client should take. These services are carried out in private, although not secretly. The manner used is simple and subtle with the lama conversing in a normal and quiet tone. It is all highly controlled.

A frequent demand is made for very simple curatives. Potions called *'chen.lab'* in a round tablet form are blessed in large quantities and then dispensed as a general healing substance. The *tulku* or lama both prescribes and dispenses treatments. His blessing or spell *(sngags)* is required to endow any substance with healing power *(dbang)*. Water for purification rites, *gser.skyems*, libations, and numerous other substances must first be blessed by a *tulku* before they can effect any magical result. Monks in the area who undertake minor purification rites and domestic ritual services have to obtain these ingredients from a *tulku*. Another common form through which *tulku* dispense their powers is in amulets; some Tibetan amulets are elaborate cross-threaded constructs hung

from the neck in pouches and wrapped in an astrological mandala.13 Other simpler forms of amulet consisting simply of brightly coloured silk threads knotted in the middle and attached around the neck are more common in India. All of these amulets acquire potency only with the breath and blessing of a *tulku*. Monks or learned yogi who are not lama do not prepare amulets for they cannot imbue the substance with magical power.

Little is mentioned in the literature about these incidental but ubiquitous and exclusive services the *tulku* perform. Yet from my own observations of their work it appears that it is here in these curative and divinatory exercises that their main occupation and power is exhibited. I have had many occasions to observe *tulku* at work over long periods of time and to note their degree of involvement and concern in various matters, spiritual and otherwise. A major demand on his time and skill is in the performance of magical powers. Often while seated in the chamber of a *tulku*, I noted a regular stream of continuous visitors for hours, all devotees of the particular lama coming to make a request of him. Since it is customary for an individual with a problem to consult a lama before making a final decision, there are many occasions for people to visit him. Not only laymen but also monks and nuns consult their *tulku*.

The dispensing of these magical charms and powers is done in a variety of situations depending on the status of the *tulku* as well as the particular conditions of his client. Usually the *tulku* remains in his chamber and receives requests in person or by letter. Occasionally a lama may go to the home of a client if the latter is very eminent or he is a good friend. Then there are *tulku*, usually young and without administrative responsibilities, who make a regular habit of going to the homes of their clients when special services are called for.

One additional aspect of the *tulku* should be mentioned that relates him to the classical shamanic system. This is the phenomenon of overlapping or double possession which I have witnessed. In addition to his regular highly controlled state of possession that I have described, he induces another brief but controlled trance during the course of divination. During this act, which is usually done in front of the client, the lama remains seated and quiet but his preoccupation and subtle moves indicate a self-induced, highly controlled possession during which he is indeed believed to be in direct communication with a deity. He says nothing audible but appears to mumble and in his hands he usually fingers a set of dice, divinatory bones, or his *mani* beads. After breaking the trance he then consults these articles, apparently looking for other signs, as well as his texts. One lama I observed rolled his eyes when entering a trance, closed them for thirty seconds and upon reopening them jerked very quickly as if returning from another consciousness. Other lama do not roll their eyes in

the same manner but merely close them in a familiar meditative pose, again sitting very still and quiet.

Another situation in which the reincarnate lama may be said to assume a trance state is during rituals involving malevolent spirits who have possessed a person. These spirits must therefore be expelled or exorcised. On the occasions when I observed exorcising sessions in no case did the lama himself lose control or behave in the dramatic way often attributed to shamans. The *tulku*'s possession and act of exorcizing remains completely subdued and there is a balance maintained between his divine and his human components. Sometimes he does this privately, but often the *tulku* is accompanied by ordinary monks when performing an exorcizing ritual. The rituals themselves, employing a number of accoutrements such as trumpet thigh-bone, skull-drum, balls and daggers, as well as effigies of afflicted individuals and cross-thread apparatus to catch spirits, have obvious shamanic parallels.[14]

In addition to performing curative and exorcising rites, reincarnate lama deal with other matters that usually involve some problem solving. They read astrologies and indicate to their clients when auspicious or bad periods are approaching; they mediate between parties; and they carry out funerary and memorial rites for the deceased. Many of these services can technically be undertaken by other religious functionaries. Ordinary monks, for example, are called by a householder to perform any of a number of rituals, including funerary services. However, *tulku* are preferred, since they are held to have greater powers. In funerary rites, it is mandatory that a *tulku*'s service be employed. Even though he does not usually attend the household ritual, he undertakes a private ritual for the deceased in his own chamber. These special qualities and powers accrue to a *tulku* by virtue of his incarnate status. It seems to be the deity he represents who exerts these powers. As I was instructed many times, any man can read texts and act out rituals, but only a *tulku* has the *'rtsa.chen.po'*.

Although the magical powers of a *tulku* are largely determined by his ascribed incarnate status, the rank and fame of any particular individual varies according to local social and political conditions. Of course, a *tulku*'s power extends to temporal issues in which he may become more or less involved, with the result that one finds *tulku* in phases of expansion or decline, hostility and so on. In some cases, the temporal power an individual *tulku* has managed to establish ends with his life, but it may be inherited and maintained by his successor, especially if in the interregnum there has been someone else, perhaps a kinsman, to carry it over. It is usually as a result of their temporal involvements that *tulku* become the subjects of criticism and the centres of factionalism. I have heard occasional adverse comments about individual *tulku*, but it seems that such criticism can be directed towards the person without offending or deprecating his sacred incarnate

identity. It is more difficult for the western observer to distinguish between the person and the incarnate deity who are both manifest in the same body. We often cannot fully appreciate how the Tibetan distinguishes and reconciles such dualities. We only see the person, while the Tibetan is mindful of the everpresent deity incarnate within him. Our limited perception in this respect probably accounts for our lack of credibility of the incarnate aspect of the *tulku*, which in turn may account for our preoccupation with his corporeal and political attributes in the past.

The Tibetan's ability to reconcile the co-existence of a person and a deity in the *tulku* extends widely throughout their religious system. For example, we find other shamanic types of functionaries operating along with a *tulku* serving the same community. In addition to those *tulku* I have described, I noted that in the vicinity of each there were several other ritual functionaries performing some of the same curative and exorcizing activities. Tibetan Buddhism, as it is practised in India and Nepal, allows for a host of diviners, spirit-mediums, oracular devices, monks and yogins, each of whom deal in his own way with malevolent as well as friendly forces encountered in the normal course of people's lives. For example, in those parts of Nepal where we find an established monastic tradition with lama, monks and nuns, there are in addition religious practitioners of varying status - admittedly they are below that of the *tulku* - employing a variety of techniques usually associated with shamans. Some are described in other papers of this volume. Those I observed in Solu-Khumbu Nepal include two female spirit mediums (called *pha.mo* or *lha.kha*), an hereditary lama very much like *tulku* called *sngags.pa*, *ser.khyim.pa* or married village ritualists and celibate monks or *dge.slon*, who are both itinerant and monastic.[15] The *pha.mo* are poor, uneducated women who only perform their services in private for individual clients. In their séance or trance, the client's deity is invoked and takes possession of the *pha.mo*, who then negotiates with the client about the matter at hand. No ritual paraphernalia are used, and there is no dance or ritual chanting. The *pha.mo* is only a medium and cannot effect a cure or exorcism directly. After consulting her, a person must still arrange for some ritual performance. This is often done by the local *ser.khyim.pa*, *sngags.pa* or lama. The *ser.khyim.pa* and *sngags.pa* are actively engaged in the performance of textually defined rituals for the purpose of exorcising and curing as well as undertaking astrological calculations and divinations for their clients. While the *ser.khyim.pa* is said to have no special magical powers, the *sngags.pa* does. I cannot identify his power more precisely at this time, but I understand it is hereditarily obtained, and that it enables him to cast spells and endow substances with curative powers.

Trying to define the precise differences and spheres of influence of each of the ritual functionaries in a Tibetan community would be an endless task and may even serve to mislead rather than

clarify. As I have indicated, all these people co-exist in a religious system which does not itself seem to distinguish metaphysical spheres and human agents so precisely as we may require for our academic purposes. Like the lama, all these agents are operating in a Buddhist framework, and at the same time a more local folk religion. We cannot say they accommodate a folk religion while the lama accommodates the ideas presented by Buddhism. However, I think it is clear that the lama, as represented by the incarnate *tulku*, is a superior kind of figure. Although he has what appear to be shamanic powers, he cannot be called a shaman. I would suggest, however, that the *tulku* may be understood as a para-shaman refined in the course of Buddhist history to meet new doctrinal demands. His continual mindfulness, his return to the world of sentient beings in order to lead them on the path to enlightenment, his role as a scholar and teacher, and his highly controlled techniques, are all consistent with Buddhist theology. Indeed the *tulku* might be interpreted as the negation of the self, incarnate!

This suggestion brings us again to the limits of this paper, and into questions on the metaphysical aspects of *tulku* developments and perpetuity. The metaphysical system supporting the reincarnate *tulku* has still to be elucidated, but I hope that my description of the Tibetan *tulku* in the preceding pages has provided some encouragement on which further investigations can proceed. The precise historical relationship between the *tulku* system and that of other Tibetan shamanic practices has still to be clarified. We need to articulate what actually constitutes the possession of the *tulku* and thus gain a better understanding of the dualities as they are represented and reconciled in him.[16]

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1. One useful discussion of this phenomenon is presented by M. Pallis (1960) in his set of essays entitled *The Way and the Mountain*. But there is as yet no full discussion of the metaphysics and operation of this complex system of rebirth.

2. It is generally accepted now that the original definition is too narrow. Any serious discussion of shamanism in other religions would be precluded by such a limited definition.

3. Lewis' wider approach facilitates the discussion of spirit possession in many more situations and takes such analyses beyond the historical framework.

4. Although Lewis suggested that Buddhism might accommodate spirit possession, he never himself tried to show precisely how this might work in the system.

5. The Sherpas are a Nepali group who trace their ancestry directly to Tibet, and in many ways approximate the Tibetans, especially in their religion. Bhotia is a loose term connoting recent migration from Tibet to Nepal or India. Bhotias, like Sherpas, are basically of Tibetan stock and their religion as well as other cultural features, are Tibetan.

6. *Yang* = again or repeated; *tshe* = life.

7. Examining the derivations of the word 'sprul' (emanation), one can identify the central quality of transformation carried by it. Cf. (Das 1970:812).

8. It is difficult to identify such deities, for there is such a vast array of supernatural figures in Tibetan religion who cannot be easily aligned with incarnate forms. There is no particular type of deity which incarnates in *tulku*; neither is there a one-to-one relation between *tulku* and deity; some deities do not reincarnate; others incarnate in several forms. Some colleagues suggest it is a 'consciousness' which emanates, and I personally feel this term is the most suitable. Before it can be used, it will require more analysis, and for the present I will use the term 'deity'.

9. At the time I made these observations, the Karo *tulku* was referred to as the *yangtshe* of the deceased Karo monk. It may be that this relationship is established first, and later the deity is identified, whereupon there is a call for more veneration. The stages by which the set of identities is established will have to be more carefully researched.

10. *Yum* = mother; *sku* = body; *zhabs* = feet. Translated as, 'Oh, venerable mother', or 'Your worship'.

11. Takshingdu, Chiwong and Dolaka are three small monastic centres in Solu Nepal. All were built after 1900. For each one there is an official *tulku*.

12. Both Chogyam Trungpa and Thupten Norbu discuss this in their biographies.

13. These are called *srung* (pron. hrung). Cf. Waddel (1895:570) and Nebesky-Wojkowitz's (1956:504-5) discussion of *srung.ḥkor*.

14. Cross-threads in Tibet are *mdos*. There is an extensive discussion of this in Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956b:Chap.IX). Höfer (1974), in a recent paper on Tamang Shamanism, lists a number of implements used by the *bombo* which we also find in the Tibetan rituals.

15. For more extensive discussions on *sngags-pa* and *ser.khyim.pa*, see my doctoral dissertation (Aziz 1974).

16. Tibetan words underlined in the text are transliterated according to the Library of Congress system. Except for Apho Rinpoche and Dripon Rinpoche, the names of other lama mentioned are pseudonyms.

XVIII

MAHĀKĀLA THE NEO-SHAMAN - MASTER OF THE RITUAL[1]

Introduction

Mahākāla is an Indo-Tibetan divinity. Mahākāla translated into English is 'he whose time is great'. The Tibetans translate Mahākāla as 'the great black one', i.e. *nag.po.chen.po.* which is also an alternative translation of the Sanskrit Mahākāla. Mahākāla, as are all the divinities in the tantric pantheon, is plastic and fluid. That is, he appears as having two-hands, four-hands, six-hands, eight-hands, ten-hands, twelve-hands and sixteen-hands; yet, he is the same divinity. The divinity, at a peak moment in the ritual, is like water in the sense that he merges with the practitioner as if the practitioner himself were water.

Shamanism has not been extensively discussed in the Buddhist tantric context. I think the reason for this is a methodological one not yet properly delineated. The traditional textual scholar as well as his anthropological counterpart have both hesitated in dealing with an in-depth study of Tibetan and Nepali Buddhist tantric shamanism. The problem is a complex one and any discussion of it is bound to set up a controversy on both the textual and anthropological sides of the fence. None the less, in the following few pages, I would like to relate a methodology for studying shamnism in Tibetan and Nepali communities that should transcend the formal differences between the textualist and the anthropologist; and indicate a relatively new concept of research which I will refer to as ethnophilology.[2]

Through the synthesis of ethnography and textual research, the evidence leads me to suggest to future researchers three general approaches to the study of shamanism in Tantric Buddhism, which may indeed apply to all religions that seem to have shamanic elements, but which are covered by a layer of sophistication developed through literary traditions. The first is the importance of ritual, a kind of cauldron that contains the totality of the culture's symbols,[3] which if ethnographically analyzed as well as experienced, produces a more humanistic and in the long run probably a more scientific understanding of the problem. The second approach is a coming to grips with the tantric or vajrayāna framework as a cultural system.[4] My own way of using this approach, already expressed elsewhere, is to think of the tantric system as a medical-

Four foot high image of Mahākāla in his demoniacal aspect surrounded by crossthreads called 'sky' (nam. mkhaḥ) having the colours of the rainbow which emit light to dispel malicious forces

cultural system which brings together the various divisions of material culture as they are culturally defined. (Stablein, 1973a; 1973b). The third aspect is cross-cultural, and for me deals not so much with comparisons and contrasts as with actual adaptations. Social change is so rapid that younger scholars especially find it difficult to remain aloof from their subject matter in the traditional subject-object sense.[5] Indeed, how can one scientifically evaluate experience or experience-related phenomena without making the effort oneself to partake of the experience? Possibly a simple act such as textual recitation over a long period of time may condition the student to a more appreciative and objective evaluation of the tantric and tantric-like cultures. Another way to approach the experience outside our own western culture is metaphorically. Indeed one hears often the phrase 'but it's only a metaphor' as if it denoted an area of unreality. But in actuality the idea of metaphor in tantric-culture is an experiental indicator. It is possible that someone who has been raised in a large western city may have difficulty in experiencing even a simple metaphor such as 'like water flowing into water'. Yet, if he is provided with the proper suggestive devices the experience can be learned, adapted and even phenomenalogically observed.

In such an approach it is difficult to separate methodology from one's actual fieldwork and conclusions. The dominant themes discussed in this paper will be in the following order: methodology including the above three categories, the setting of Mahākāla, the fluid universe of Mahākāla, ecstasy and the ambrosia cycle, the tantric power and Mahākāla, a model neo-shaman.

Ethnophilology and the Ritual Basis

Ethnophilology and the ritual basis designates an inter-relationship between textual research and ethnography. Tantric Buddhism refers to a canon of Tibetan and Sanskrit manuscripts that within their home cultures have been handed down and preserved in relative secrecy primarily for the purpose of maintaining the tradition of the ritual specialist. It is as a master of the ritual that the tantric shaman performs. Yogis and householding practitioners who obtain the proper initiations and instructions to perform tantric *pūjā* also are ritual specialists. Some vajramasters are specialists in particular tantras and certain sects emphasize one divinity over others. The fluidity of the divinities, however, prevents the Nepali and Tibetan tantrics from clinging to one form or another.

The subject of my own research was the *Mahākālatantra*, a manuscript that dates back to the twelfth century. When I began my work in 1968, in Kathmandu Valley, I began with the editing of the Sanskrit text, after which I realized that a partial content of the text was ritually enacted by both Nepali and Tibetan vajramasters of the valley. The manuscript as well as the enacted

Mahākāla *pūjā* themselves, seduced me into a detailed study of the *pūjā*, especially the one held at the end of every year.

The manuscripts themselves are ritual objects which enter the make-up of the 'ceremonial circle'. Among the temple complexes of Kathmandu one can see the devotees taking blessings directly from the sacred books. In fact, manuscripts are venerated in a devotional manner as much or more than they are actually read. Quite often they are read without an attempt to understand them in the western discursive sense, and this refers to all manuscripts not just tantric ones. Tantric manuscripts are particularly venerated and are still regarded by some vajramasters as dangerous to read without the proper initiation. The manuscripts themselves tell us that one who is not initiated will be prone to great suffering if he tampers with the tantric secrets. Indeed, the tantras are guides to ritual power (*siddhi*, Skt.), which for centuries, until the advent of industrialization, had been the most venerated and feared body of knowledge in South Asia.

The manuscript itself provides hundreds of examples of ritual practice. These references to the ritual process can be loosely categorized in the following way: sacred utterances (*mantra*, Skt,), rules for conducting (*pūjā pūjāvidhi*, Skt.), the creation of divinities (*devotthāna*, Skt.), fire sacrifice (*yajña*, Skt.), medicine (*oṣadhi*, Skt.), sacred circles (*mandala*, Skt.), and rules for cultivating one's being without the outer ritualistic framework, called completion yoga (*utpannayoga*, Skt.)

The ceremonial circle is a kind of symbolic cauldron containing all the essential elements in the material culture. The vajramaster literally (physically and mentally) reduces as much of the world as he knows into his ceremonial circle. For example, the tantric ritual always contains transubstantiated substances, (*Samayavastu* Skt.) of animal, vegetable and mineral origin. The ceremonial circle is also a repository of what we Westerners would categorize as the humanities. The arts go into the making of the ritual process, i.e. music, painting, sculpture, drama, dance and poetry. Even the principles of archaic science as known by the vajramaster form part of the circle. Indeed, the vajramaster's skills are related to the primary meaning of yoga, which in its verbal form means 'to join'. He joins syllables, substances, objects and beings into a ritual system that miniaturizes the totality of his culture.

The vajramaster is, then, a master of his own material world and culture. He transubstantiates it and transfers the resultant ambrosia to his community which is dependent on it for health, wealth and wisdom. In every ceremony presided over by the vajramaster, his role as healer, creator of prosperity and nullifier of unseen malicious forces is apparent.

My first impression upon participating in and observing the Mahākāla *pūjā* was that it entailed a 'ritualization of the humanities'. After a great many interviews of devotees as well as vajramasters, I realized that the term medical-cultural system was appropriate. (Stablein 1973a; 1973b). The humanities are not only ritualized but transubstantiated into curing forces. The devotee who takes his blessing at the ceremonial circle receives not only pills and other eatables but absorbs blessings from looking at the circle, smelling its incense, hearing its music and contemplating its divine nature.

I will not spend much time on the third aspect of the methodology except to note that some of my insights, such as realizing that humanistic and medical cultural approaches could be used to explain tantric ritual, could have been derived from non-experiential research. But for me they were not. I will put it this way: the simile 'like water blending into water' became very alive in the context of the *pūjā* where sounds, smells, sights, thoughts and tastes literally merged so that at times it seemed as if I were experiencing what the tantrics call 'equal flavour', (*samarasa*, Skt.). It was quite clear in my field work that this quality, at times more apparent through participation than through observation, acted as a catalyst for significant connections that otherwise might not have been generated. The method divides the personality so that different selves in the same person can in turn analyse the experience. These selves included myself as the research scholar, myself as the Buddhist, and myself the middle-class Christian. I feel that other researchers have experienced the same phenomena but have not given it the same importance.

The Setting of Mahākāla

The setting of Mahākāla is described in tantric manuscripts and their commentaries. This setting can be observed and experienced in both Tibetan and Nepali rituals. From this point on, I will be discussing the Tibetan setting. The construction of the setting, which is unsurpassed in artistic qualities, sets the vajramaster aside as an artist par excellence. That 'the setting which takes place in a monastery (*dgon.pa*, T) be pleasing to the senses' is mentioned in every ritual text. The Tibetan Mahākāla *pūjā* setting is structured into the following social configurations:[6] 1) the vajramaster (*slob.dpon.rdo.rje*, T) who sits towards the rear of the temple; 2) his assistant, also a vajramaster but sometimes called the best-helper-for-success, (*sgrub.pahi.grogs.mchog.*, T) sits a little below and to the left but sometimes directly across from the leading vajramaster. It is he who enacts the drama of Mahākāla during one of the peak moments of the *pūjā*; 3) directly across from the 'best-helper-for-success' sits the conductor, (*om.mdzad*, T). He not only begins the liturgical proceedings with the seed syllable *oṁ*, as the lexicons state, but he is the conductor of the musical aspect of the

ceremony. He takes his cues from the leading vajramaster, but for the most part he is free to slow or increase the tempo or stop the ceremony as he deems appropriate. There are lulls in the ceremony for the purpose of meeting bodily needs and drinking tea; but they are only lulls because one never experiences a total break in the ceremony. 4) The chief of the offering, (*mchod.dpon*, T) whose main task is to provide the offerings required during the ritual cycle, purifies the ceremonial circle with incense, offers the ritual cakes, (*gtor.ma*, T) and adds the finishing symbolical touches during the transubstantiating process. He stands to one side presiding over the main altar. 5) Following in two straight lines from the 'best-helper-for-success' and the 'conductor' sit the cymbal players and the Tibetan trumpet players. 6) Behind them and along the walls sit the younger monks and the master-of-discipline, (*ḥkhrim.dpon*, T). 7) In the centre is a multi-coloured tower of cross threads that weave their way around a four-foot-high facial image of Mahākāla. This is where the 'best-helper-for-success' dramatizes the nullification of evil. Finally, 8) is the temple keeper, (*dgon.gner*, T) who constantly moves about keeping order among the hundreds of Tibetan and Nepali lay followers, who file clockwise around the ceremonial circle of Mahākāla. Behind the circle is a magnificent figure of Sakyamuni.

Astrological configurations are part of the all-around setting and the ritual can be performed on a limited number of occasions: the eighth day of the black half of the last month of winter, (*dgun.zla.tha.chung.gi.nag.poḥi.bgyad*, T) which is the time of the Tibetan New Year (*Lo.gsar*), sometime during the month of February; the fifth day of the black half of the last month of spring, (*dpyid.zla.tha.chung.gi.nag.poḥi.lnga*, T) which falls in April, and lastly, the fourteenth day of the black half of the last month of either summer or autumn, which falls, respectively, around the end of August or November. (Due to the differences between the lunar and solar calendars the English months are only approximations).

The prime energy of the ceremonial circle is the offering, (*mchod.pa*, T) which can be regarded as input into the ceremonial system. The three kinds of offerings according to the ceremonial medical tradition are outward (*phyi*, T), inward (*nang*) and arcane (*gsang*). The visible shell of material existence that satisfies the five senses is the outward offering. This offering includes flowers, incense music, colours and food. Inner offerings are usually substances that represent the biological functioning of man such as his inner organs, fat, blood, marrow and so on. The arcane offering is a mixture of semen and blood that stands for the procreative forces of existence. These two substances can be represented by a clear alcohol and a dark red tea. Most of the visible offerings, often placed near the main image of Sakyamuni, are bowls of rice, Tibetan bread and fruits that become transubstantiated and are given to the devotees as ambrosia (*bdud.rtsi*, T).

These offerings also are 'splendorous ripples' (*byin.ci.brlabs.*, T). The three types of offerings can be given either physically or mentally. By his action the worshipper symbolically offers his or her own body. When the offering is returned as ambrosia (*bdud.rtsi*, T), it represents the transformed output of the ceremonial circle, which is returned to the devotee by means of his senses.[7]

The ability to undergo suffering and to sacrifice one's own body is very much the essence of the vajramaster's charisma. It is the vajramaster merging his own sacrificial body with that of the devotee's offerings that enables the substance to become ambrosia (*bdud.rtsi*, T).[8]

The Fluid Universe of Mahākāla and Magical Flight

The fluid universe of Mahākāla and magical flight are a little like the currents of the deep ocean; or, possibly like the winds of the high atmosphere. Part of this fluidity is continuation through history. The Tibetan vajramaster is believed to be chosen by the consciousness of a deceased *lāmā* who takes on a new body at the moment of his chosen earthling's conception. In the Nepali system, the vajramaster inherits his sociospiritual role in much the same way as his Hindu counterpart, the Brahman. The lineage of vajramasters literally flows through history and so does the knowledge and intuition that they embody. During a *pūjā* this 'flow' is channelled into the ceremonial circle and stored there. Partly this is done through the presence of the living vajramaster. But it is accomplished also when, at the beginning of every *pūjā*, the vajramasters and their monks cast their prayers (*gsol.ba.hdebs.pa*, T) to the lineage of vajramasters and divinities of the three traditions,[9] beckoning them to assume the sublime level of inseparability (*dbyer.med.mchog.gi.go.ḥphang.*, T).

During the *pūjā* the vajramaster functions on a different level than the monks, for he is building up to what, for him, is the apothesis of the ceremony - the creation of the ambrosia. His own central point of merging is with Mahākāla himself:

> 'Immediately I am the Blessed One
> That body terrible, Oh so black
> Holding the chooper-skull bowl fierce,
> And (standing) with the wife.'[10]

It happens 'immediately like the forming of a bubble from (rushing) water.'[11] This is called 'realizing the pride', (*nga.rgyal.bzung.ba*, T) of Mahākāla. This instant of mystical union is the tradition of vajramasters, Bodhisattvas, and in general all of the spiritual and cultural heroes are reduced to one essence expressed through the body, speech and mind of the vajramaster, who then transfers this essence to material objects, substances and beings.

This *yoga* of the *lāmā* (*bla.ma.rnal.ḥbyor*, T) or merging of the vajramasters, pin-points one of the main differences between it and the classical shamaṇ's magical flight. Rex Jones (1968) wrote a useful paper suggesting that 'shamanism' for the Hindu and Buddhist was a necessary and important part of their religion. I think this is correct. I will try to help pin-point this problem in terms of Buddhist tantrism. Concerning magical flight, the curious aspect of the Tibetan tantric's praxis is that he does fly, at least his devotees believe he can fly, but the flight does not ostensibly take him in a special quest of spirits.[12] What I would like to suggest is that when a culture makes a transition to having a written tradition those who become learned, usually the priestly class, adjust and accommodate their non-literate view of the universe to their newly acquired way of thinking. In my interviews with illiterate Tibetans and other Tibetan speaking peoples of Nepal I received a 'yes' answer to the question, 'Could vajramasters fly?' But when I asked the vajramasters themselves if they could go on magical flights or not they unanimously said 'no', but added that there were other vajramasters in the past and possibly in the present who could fly in the sky.

When Mahākāla and his troupe are formally invited to take their places within the ceremonial circle, the vajramaster does not go to their realm to bring them back but rather he lures and invites them in much the same way a lay member would lure and invite an influential person to his house. He prepares an aesthetically pleasing setting replete with incense, music, a clean surrounding and tasty cuisine. When the final moment comes to invite (*spyan.ḥdren*, T) Mahākāla the vajramaster makes four hand gestures (*phyag.rgya.bzhi*, T) corresponding to the utterance of four syllables: *dzah*, *hūṁ*, *baṁ*, *hoḥ* which makes the vajramaster and Mahākāla 'inseparable like water being poured into water'. He is of 'equal taste' (*ro.mnam*, T) with Mahākāla; indeed he is at that moment the transubstantiated being (*dam.tshig.pa*, T).

As can be plainly seen, the vajramaster does not go on a shamanistic flight in the classical shamanic sense; neither does he play the role of the intermediary between God and man in the Christian sense. Although there is always a danger that in certain crucial moments of the liturgy the vajramaster may lose control of his faculties, he does not become possessed in the same way a shaman does. If a shaman can say, 'I am possessed by a spirit', the vajramaster, after the invitation phase of the ceremony, can say 'I *am* Mahākāla.'

Historically the traditional calling of the classical shaman did not satisfy the vajramaster who had a sophisticated Buddhist canon at his fingertips. He did not reject the possibility of flying into the heavens, but first he had to become Mahākāla. In order to obtain a 'tantric high' such a vajramaster was entitled

by the *Mahākālatantra* to partake of psychoactive agents such as *Datura stramonium*.

Ecstasy, Arcane Body, the Ambrosia Cycle and Purity

Ecstasy, arcane body, the ambrosia cycle and purity refers to a body-speech-mind meditative-like process where the vajramaster generates within himself a curing ambrosia (*bdud.rtsi*, T) that he imparts to the ceremonial circle and ultimately to the outer world. In classical shamanism ecstasy is associated with magical flight but in the vajramaster's internal effort to produce the curing ambrosia it metaphorically brings into play an erotic configuration of Mahākāla and his consorts. Here ecstasy does not imply 'thrown into a frenzy or stupor' but the more modern meaning 'an exalted state of feeling which engrosses the mind to the exclusion of thought'. The Tibetans generally refer to such a state as *dgaḥ.ba*, that is usually translated joy and *bde.ba* which is rendered as bliss (Wayman 1968). I think that the English word ecstasy however approximates both of the above Tibetan terms when discussing the production of ambrosia.

The arcane body is called the vajrabody (*rdo.rje.lus*, T) which has been described in some detail by other scholars (Wayman 1968: 327; Snellgrove 1959:I.36; Bharati 1970:247). The main function of this inner body is to produce the curing ambrosia. Since it brings to mind the accounts of classical shamans who store medicine in their bodies (Lommel 1967:51), we should probably look for this phenomena cross-culturally. The vajrabody is an evolutionary extension of this earlier inner storehouse for inner medicine. Indeed some say that there are 72,000 channels that connect the various circular configurations of the vajrabody - a rather complex development. How does the fluid universe, the ecstasy and the vajrabody enter into the make-up of the ambrosia (*bdud.rtsi*, T)?

The process is referred to in Sanskrit as *utpanna yoga* which means 'completion *yoga*' (*rdzogs.rim*, T). It is considered to be one of the highest teachings of tantric Buddhism and is reserved for the vajramaster. There are various methods of how ambrosia is produced. The following description is a model which could structurally apply to any one of them.

After the vajramaster has realized: 'all things are pure in their own nature, I am pure in my own nature',[13] he experiences the world as being empty (*stong.pa*, T) within the ceremonial circle. The emptiness is said to be like the sky (*nam.ḥkha*, T). In this metaphorical sense, sky (*nam.ḥkha*, T) denotes absolute purity; hence, empty is also pure. It is out of this sky-like-pure emptiness that the vajramaster projects Mahākāla, his consort and the curing ambrosia (*bdud.rtsi*, T). The crucial moment

in the praxis is when the consort of Mahākāla enters the vajra-body through the top of the head. She melts her way through the arcane structure of the vajramaster which is physically activated. There are five circular configurations: 1) the thirty two petalled circle in the head known as the great ecstasy (*sbyi.bor.bde.chen. ḥkhor.lor.rtsa.ḥdab.so.gñis*, T); 2) the sixteen petalled circle in the throat (*mgrin.par.bcu.drug.*, T); 3) an eight petalled circle in the heart (*sñing.gar.brgyad*, T); 4) the sixty-four petalled circle within the area of the navel (*lte.ba.drug.bcu.re.bzhi*, T); and 5) a twenty-eight petalled circle in the area of the genitals (*gsang.gnas.ñi.shu.rtsa.brgyad*, T). Within these circular arrangements appear five seed syllables: *oṁ*, *hrīḥ*, *hūṁ*, *trāṁ* and *hāṁ* which emanate white, red, dark blue, yellow and green Mahākālas and their consorts. Their light rays absorb and transubstantiate the five poisons: delusion (*gti.mug*, T); lust (*ḥdod.chags*, T); hatred (*zhe.sdang*, T); pride (*nga.rgyal*, T) and jealousy (*phrag. dog.*, T) into ambrosia (*bdud.rtsi*, T).

The joy and ecstasy arises in mutual association with the various circular configurations starting with the throat region that generates joy (*dgaḥ*, T); the heart which produces super joy (*mchog.dgaḥ*, T); the navel which produces extraordinary joy (*khyad.par.gyi.dgaḥ*, T) and finally the region of the genitals which produces together-born joy (*lhan.cig.skyes.dgaḥ*, T).

The crucial point in the process is to maintain the union of the empty (*stong.pa.*, T) with the ecstasy (*bde.ba*, T). The model reveals that ecstasy in the Buddhist tantric sense, though not associated with magical flight per se that would denote a more dualistic universe of being, is related to the coupling eidetic images of Mahākāla and his consort. The procreative metaphor is clear and what might be considered as yogic sublimation must be analyzed in terms of the psychological feed back mechanism of eidetic imagery (Stablein 1973a; 1973b).

The Tantric Powers

The tantric powers (*dngos.grub*, T) should be investigated as to when the powers occur and how they function in the ritual itself. As we have already said the Tibetan layman who is illiterate will believe that the vajramaster can fly in the sky as well as perform any miraculous work. He also believes that the vajramaster will not do so unless it is for the sake of all sentient beings. Hence he does not seek for a steady flow of miracles and displays of power from the vajramaster. If he is able to witness such an occasion it is considered extremely auspicious.

The main prerequisite for tantric powers (*dngos.grub*, T); (*siddhi*, Skt.) is to have mastered at least one *tantra* such as the *Mahākālatantra* which relates the proper secret formulas.

This of course assumes the proper initiations and indeed that the student be at the least a budding vajramaster. If the vajramaster follows the ambrosia creation procedure as delineated above he will cultivate his own body as if it were melting into each Mahākāla just like rain falling into the ocean after which he obtains the power of body, speech, mind, accomplishment and work which corresponds to the five circular centres of the above described vajra body.

At the end of the Mahākāla *pūjā* the vajramaster contemplates on receiving a blessing, i.e. 'splendorous ripples' (*byin.ci. brlabs*, T), from Mahākāla and his consort and on receiving power. In this case power does not necessarily mean the sky-going accomplishments and so forth but does point to further practices that could set the vajramaster aside as a shaman with a bag of supernormal tricks. For those we have to turn to the *Mahākālatantra* itself where there are scores of formulas to take the vajramaster into the psychoactive realms of flying, invisibility, being able to see under the ground, to live for a thousand years and so on. There is not space here to delineate them but what is important for the study of shamanism is that the vajramaster is believed to have access to most, if not all, of the powers that are assigned to the classical shaman. The difference seems to be that the textual world of the vajramaster, despite the emphasis on the oral tradition, has conditioned his eyes to a more intellectually phenomenological station in the evolution of the shaman complex.

Summary

In summary it seems that the Tibetan and Nepali vajramaster should fall under the appelation of neo-shaman. First of all he can obtain power to fly through the air but is not dependent upon it, in his fluid universe, for the curing ambrosia. He is the apothesis of the divinity Mahākāla, and for this reason is able to control the malevolent and disease-carrying beings that endanger his community. Secondly, he becomes ecstatic but not in the archaic 'beside oneself' sense of the word. Indeed unlike the more primitive shaman the vajramaster does 'not not enjoy' the ecstasy. One of the most noticeable outward features of vajramasters is that they are seemingly happy beings. The words, contented, serene and ecstatic aptly describe especially those vajramasters who are, so to say, 'very high'. Such an example can not fail to impress those seekers of the truth who place their values on charismatic appearances as well as platonic-like truths. The ecstasy of the vajramaster results from his merging with the divinities themselves. A third point is that the merging is achieved through a very specific praxis and depends on assumption of an 'inner body', the vajrabody. I do not say 'mystical body' because as yet, except in the most general and vague terms, there does not seem to be a common enough denominator between tantric

Buddhism and western Christianity to discuss inner bodies using this terminology. I would like to suggest however that this should be an interesting area of research and that we do have some evidence among the more archaic style of shamans of an inner body. Of course there is in Buddhism the 'receptacle consciousness' (*asraya, alambana* and *alaya vijnana*, Skt.) that receives the building blocks for this arcane body (vajrabody). My learned, now deceased, teacher (Padma Rgyal mtshan) said over and over again that the vajrabody must be cultivated over a long period of time. How else could it be cultivated than through the impressions formed within this pure subconscious that indeed has been continuous through countless previous births? Ecstasy in the Buddhist tantric framework follows the analogy of the excitement that takes place between male and female. This has lead many readers of 'pop-tantrism' to think of Tibetan Buddhism in terms of western style erotica. The above model shows how the ecstasy is produced through eidetic imagery within the vajramaster's fluid universe.

But what about the shaman's ability for ecstasy? The ecstasy is a resultant synthesis of emotions where the roots of pain and suffering (i.e. the five poisons mentioned above) are turned into ambrosia (*bdud.rtsi*, T) which is in turn transferred to other sentient beings. Our fourth point is that for the devotee who is sitting in the ceremonial circle the vajramaster has successfully utilized the base human emotions - in particular the one of lust (*ḥdod.chag*, T) as if they were medicines to be compounded into a curing ambrosia (*bdud.rtsi*, T). The offering of one's body as already pointed out is an offering which is returned as a transsubstantiated entity. In our Mahākāla *pūjā* it is symbolized by what is often literally called the flowers of the five sensual powers (*dbang.po.lngahi.me.tog*, T). Included in the offering are the eyes, ears nose, tongue and heart. The offering is made in the context of keeping vows which pragmatically can be summarized as a giving of the senses. It is sacrificing the gross body that in its most sophisticated sense takes the form of the above description of completion *yoga* (*utpanna yoga*, Skt.; *rdzog.rim.*, T). For the devotee who is sitting in the ceremonial circle suffering is nullified by the very virtue of his being within sight of the vajramaster. Although the vajramaster is in a trance-like state when producing the inner ambrosia he is seldom unaware of his immediate surroundings. At the time of transferring the ambrosia he is not at all in a trance. Rather he is ecstatic, because he is sharing his charisma for the sake of all sentient beings.

To conclude, what I believe we are aiming for in terms of the psychology and evolution of shamanism is how key shamanic behaviour patterns change over the course of history and from one culture to another. I think that ritual and its changes, whether we call it secular or sacred, is the framework and that the ritual change will determine the change of the shaman's behaviour. Indeed shamanism has not been lost in any society; only the ritual has

changed. I think that the manner in which rituals change determine the change in shamanic behaviour. The Vajrayāna Buddhism as practised by the Tibetans offers us an example of how shamanism may have evolved from a preliterate to a literate stage of development. Possibly we should study shamanism in our own cultures in terms of the social changes wrought by the introduction of the Guttenburg press, industrialization, the atomic age and so on. It may very well be that the key dynamic force that begins to change individuals and society is the mutation that takes place within the primary rituals in culture.

William Stablein

1. The following paper is a revised version of my presentation at the AAA meetings in New Orleans on November 30th, 1973. I want to thank John Hitchcock, Lowell Bean and Rex Jones for continuing interest in the ethnographic aspect of my work.

2. I am grateful to Joe Reinhard for discussing at great length with me the merits of proposing this methodology. This methodology could also pertain to the Bön sect which has its own canon of literature. In particular I am grateful to Alex Wayman whose work represented the best of the textual tradition and to Agehananda Bharati who was the first scholar to apply anthropology to Tantric Buddhism.

3. Clifford Geertz points out the importance of the ritualistic use of symbols (Geertz 1965:205-216). When we talk about ritual the object, act, event or whatever takes on the character of the sacred - as long as it remains in the ceremonial setting. The term transubstantiate denotes the transition from the secular to the sacred, or more succintly the flesh of the secular becomes undifferentiated with the flesh of the sacred. How ritual specialists transubstantiate aspects of material culture is the crucial problem for deciding the dynamics of transference. For understanding the general background of the concepts of ethnophilology see Hymes (1964).

4. Works dealing with Vajrayāna Buddhism for the most part have been translations of classical texts. Most translations such as done by Guenther (1969) emphasizes philosophical interpretations. Such translators such as Wayman (1968) and George (1971) emphasize philological principles. To date the only major attempt to approach Vajrayāna Buddhism anthropologically as well as linguistically is Professor Bharati's *The Tantric Tradition*. The direction of my own

writing (Stablein 1973a; 1973b; 1973c) is to a large extent dependent on the ethnographic aspects of my own research in Kathmandu valley, Nepal, from 1968-1972.

5. In a recent study of a Kāli cult in Guyana (Singer, Araneta and Naidoo: 1973) the authors succintly state the blurring of the traditional differences between the researcher and his fields of investigation.

6. The following description conforms to the Mahākāla ritual setting in the Karmarājamahāvihāra located on the crest of Svayambhu, Kathmandu. I gratefully and humbly submit my thanks and appreciation to the vajramasters, monks and lay people that conduct services, teach and maintain that truly holy monastery. My ultimate appreciation goes to Ven.Sa.bcu. Rimpoche, Ang.sing. Rimpoche and the now deceased Venerable Padma Rgyal mtshan.

7. In the main ceremony for Mahākāla called 'satisfaction and nourishment' (*bskang.gsol*, T) there are many offerings: 'the place offering of Mahākāla' (*gdan.ḥbul*, T); 'the material universe of Mahākāla offering' called in short 'the *pūjā* offering' (*mchod.pa.hbul*, T); 'the feast offering' (*tshogs.kyi.ston.mo*, T) and 'the special *pūjā*-giving' (*khyad. par.gyi.mchod.pa.bstab.pa.*, T). It is clear that most of the offerings in one way or another represent the giver's own being which is in accordance with the traditional Mahāyāna concept of compassion (*karuna*, Skt.). The 'output' which the devotee ingests as a curing ambrosia (*bdud.rtsi.*, T) has its parallel in the Bodhisattva's act of truth (*satya kriyā*, Skt.).

8. The vajramaster or Bodhisattvas' ability to offer his own being calls to mind the Siberian shaman's experiences of being cut into pieces (Lommel 1967:54). The Bodhisattva and tantric model is a later more sophisticated development.

9. The three traditions are: male tradition (*yab.brgyud*, T); female tradition (*yum.brgyud*, T) and the transubstantiated procreative tradition (*zhal.sbyor.brgyud.*, T).

10. *bdag.ñid.skad.gcig.bcom.ldan.ḥdas/*
nag.po.chen.po.ḥjig.paḥi.sku/
mi.bzad.gri.gug.thod.pa.ḥdzih/
yum.dang.bcas.paḥi.sku.ru.gyur/

11. *chu.las.chu.bur.shar.ba.ltar/*

12. The neo-shamanism that I am suggesting in this article is what Mircea Eliade calls 'recent influences' (Eliade 1964: 321). The ritual complex of the vajramaster introduces a

recent phase of shamanism based not only on a magico-religious setting but also on a new intellectual foundation introduced by the Sanskrit language and the Buddhist canon. It has been a kind of intermediary phase between feudalism and modernization. For a comment on historical phases of shamanism see Rank (1967:18).

13. *Oṃ svabhāvasuddhāḥ sarvadharmāḥ svabhāvasuddho haṃ/*

XIX

SORCERY IN THE NEPALESE CODE OF 1853

The republication of the Jang Bahādur Rānā Code contains a section on sorcery[1] that is of interest with regard to the history of religions in Nepal. This is an aspect of Nepali life rarely treated by modern ethnographers and insufficiently documented in historical records. For this reason it it useful to translate this section of the code. However, the use of this document for sociological analysis admittedly poses some problems. To what extent does this text describe current practices and to what extent does it represent an attempt to modify or suppress these practices? Our understanding of popular Nepali religion of the mid 19th century is still too inadequate to permit us to give definitive answers to these questions. Nevertheless, it would be interesting for the ethnologist to compare this text with the magico-religious life as he knows it today.

In three previous articles, I have described certain aspects of the magico-religious activities of the *jhākri*, (Macdonald 1962; 1966a; 1966b), the healers in Nepal. Since then Mr. J. Hitchcock has noted that 'the curing methods of the Siberian type of shaman are found among Northern Magars'.[2] The posthumous work of Bernard Pignède has supplied us with information concerning the *pucu* and the *klirī* of the Gurung;[3] and Mr. C. Jest (1964:37-42) has recently treated the role of the *drom* among the Thākāli. In his Nepāli-Nepāli dictionary, Mr. B. C. Sarma (1962.401) defines the word *'jhāṅkri'* as follows: *mantra-tantradvārā āphnā sarīma devatā vā pretko āves prakaṭ garera rogīko upacār garne vaidya; dhāmī*: 'a healer *(vaidya)* who treats illnesses by revealing the wishes of the *devatā* or the *pret* that he brings upon his own body by means of *mantra-tantra*.' Under *dhāmi* the same author (1962:541) writes: *mantra-tantradvārā āphnā sarīmā kunai devatā vā bhūt, pret ādiko āves garāera bhūt, pret, boksī ādiko bādhā haṭāune vyakti; jhāṅkrī:* 'an individual who wards off the attacks of *bhūt, pret, boksī*, etc., by attracting to his own body by means of *mantra-tantra* a *devatā, bhūt, pret*, etc.' According to these two definitions, it appears that the Nepalis themselves do not clearly distinguish between the techniques of these two healers.[4] A person with an unidentified disorder will call upon one or the other, perhaps even one after the other successively. The healer proceeds with a diagnosis; he may simply prescribe medication or he may reveal that the patient has been possessed by spirits.

These evil spirits, independent of any terrestrial support, may emerge ready-made from the stock of spiritualistic accessories that the healer has acquired from his training and personal experiences. On the other hand, the healer may identify these spirits as emanating from deceased men or women who are either outraged by the treatment they have received from the living in the execution of rites due to them or who are unhappy with the behaviour of the living in a specific domain (bad handling of family affairs, etc.). The healer will probably arrive at the latter type of diagnosis when he is well acquainted with his client's family history. There is finally a third kind of diagnosis possible. If the healer exploits the patient's situation in order to satisfy his personal grudges, or if he is bound by public opinion (of which he is always well aware), he may name a living person as responsible for his client's possession. He will accuse the man or woman in question of being a *bokso* or *boksi*. The latter are therefore human adversaries of the *jhãkri/dhāmi* in the magico-religious struggle for the possession of the mind and body of the patient. This rivalry is not clearly indicated in the dictionaries, and it is for this reason that I wish to underline it from the start. For example, Sir R. Turner (1931:231, 461) gives the meaning of 'wizard' to both *jhãkri* and *bokso*.[5] As a healer and exorcist, the *jhãkri* represents a traditionalist element in Nepali society whereas his adversary participates in activities the people consider anti-social.[6]

Turner (1931:461) translates *boksi* as 'witch; term of endearment'. We must add that it is also a term of disgrace, given to bad-tempered people or to those with a dubious reputation. When this person is a woman, I have heard her called a *boksini*, a word not found in the dictionaries. In the English-Nepali dictionary of Puṣkar Samser (1938:2199) 'witch' is translated as *boksī vā jadugar* '*boksī* or magician'. This seems to suggest that *boksī* applies to a man or a woman. I nevertheless have chosen to translate *boksī* in the feminine. B.C. Sarma (1962:768) renders *boksī* by *ţunā-munā garne strī; boksero jānne strī; ḍaṅkinī; ḍāinī*. Turner (1931:255, 257) translates each of these last two words as 'witch'. I (Macdonald 1962:108) have already indicated that the word *jhãkri* may designate either a being or a spirit. According to Sarma it would be the same for *boksī; ḍaṅkinī* and *ḍāini* are words that apply more often to spirits than to real women. In popular usage it is nearly impossible to make a semantic distinction between these two latter terms (*ḍaṅkinī* perhaps shows a more distinct literary influence), and I would translate each of them by 'evil fairy who may, if necessary, be rendered helpful'. I believe however that it is rare for a *jhãkri* to designate his physical adversary as *ḍaṅkinī/dākini* or *ḍāinī*. Let us again examine Sarma's (1962:422) other definitions; *boksero jānne strī*, 'a woman who knows witchcraft' and *ţunā-munā garne strī*, 'a woman who uses *ţunā-munā*'; *ţunā-munā* is an *anukaran* expression, similar to our onomatopea. *Munā* has no meaning and *ţunā* is rendered by

Sarma as: *kunai vyaktilāi āphno vas-vartī pārma garicko mantra-tantrako pravog*, 'the use of *mantra-tantra* to make any individual fall under one's power'. It is interesting to note that this definition does not mention a trance; it is not said that the woman calls spirits upon her body.

These summary explanations will, I hope, make it easier to follow the text:

1) At the time of a quarrel concerning land, money, or property, if a person complains (in court) of having been called a *boksī* and if the complaint is found justified, he who initiated the accusation of *boksī* must pay a fine of Rs. 5. If the quarrel took place first and the accusation of *boksī* was subsequent (that is, in the absence of the accused), the accuser must pay a fine of Rs. 2½. If the accuser does not pay the fine, he must be confined to prison according to (the regulations of) the *Ain*.

2) If someone complains (in court) that a man or a woman bewitched him and if after investigation, the bewitchment is not proven, he who lodged the complaint must pay a fine of Rs. 20. If the fine is not paid, the man or woman in question will be imprisoned, according to the *Ain*.

3) If a patient is branded - and if the *boksī* also is branded - and if an invalid is made to dance under the influence of *mantra* - and if the *boksī* also dances - and if furthermore a patient's head is shaved and the *boksī*'s also, then the *boksī* must be driven from the village. If a *boksī* is chased in this way, there must be no sanctions (against those who chase her).[7]

4) If in the process of caring for a patient, a *dhāmi*, etc. makes him dance and does not make the *boksī* dance and if he brands the patient and no mark appears on the *boksī*'s[8] body and if (furthermore) the patient dies and the *boksī* is (subsequently) accused of being a sorcerer and driven from the village, this will not constitute proof that it is in fact a *boksī*. Those who (under these circumstances) in a village or in a house accuse a person of sorcery and drive him from his house must pay a fine of Rs. 60. If the accused is not chased from his house but only called a *boksī*, he who made the accusation must pay a fine of Rs. 20.

5) Concerning accusations of sorcery: when a woman who was not branded by a *dhāmi*, etc. and who did not dance under the influence of a *mantra* is examined in an *adālat*,[9] a police station or an *amāl*, (Regmi 1945 III; 114-122) she must not be obliged to put her hand in a container of oil or boiling water, she must not be compelled to put mustard on her eyes and must not be forced to grasp a red-hot iron, etc...

Even if she does not successfully pass the test, a woman subjected to these ordeals must not be considered guilty. The judge imposing such ordeals, whether he be *dvārya* or *bicāri*,[10] must pay a fine of Rs.50. Such a woman must win her case.

6) When a *dhāmi*, etc. goes to brand a patient, thinking that he will also mark a *boksī* and if at the time of branding the patient the latter is wounded whereas the *boksī* is not, the *dhāmi* etc., will pay a fine of Rs. 30. If he does not pay (the fine), he will be imprisoned according to the *Ain*.

7) In the case of a *dhāmi* or of anyone else who, while playing a drum, goes to 'hit the roof' of a house[11] and evict someone solely on the basis of what was said by a patient, if the evicted person was neither branded nor made to dance, the *boksī* must not be considered as a *boksī* and this type of case must not be judged in court. It is not a question here of true *boksī*. The *dhāmi* etc. who (under these conditions) accuses someone of being a *boksī* must pay a fine of Rs. 80. If the fine is not paid, the individual in question will be imprisoned. The person accused of sorcery must receive a *pagari*;[12] Rs. 1 for the *pagari* and Rs. 2 for the case, a total of Rs. 3.

8) If a *dhāmi* or anyone else chases someone from his home, claiming that the latter is a *boksī*, this *dhāmi* etc. will pay a fine of Rs. 60. If he merely makes an accusation of sorcery, but does not chase the person from his home, his fine will be Rs. 20. If he does not pay the fine, he must be imprisoned.

9) If a *dhāmi* or someone else from an inferior *jāt*, at the time of undertaking a cure, asks a patient of a higher *jāt* to lick the soles of his feet and if, for example, a Chetri (Kṣatri) *dhāmi* asks a Bahun (Brahman) or a Rajput to lick the soles of his feet he must pay a fine of Rs. 60. If a *matvāli (dhāmi)* asks a wearer of the sacred thread *(tāgādhāri)* (to lick the soles of his feet), he must pay a fine of Rs. 70. If an impure *(achuti) dhāmi* of a *jāt* whose water is not accepted asks a man of a pure *(cokhā) jāt* to lick the soles of his feet, he must pay a fine of Rs. 100.[13] If he does not pay the fine, he must be imprisoned according to the *Ain*. A patient who licked the feet of a *dhāmi*, etc. must receive a purification certificate for which he must pay 1 *mohor*.[14] He has the right to a purification certificate.

10) Whoever, *dhāmi* or other, claims to cure a married woman, a widow or a young girl of any *jāt*, and who in so doing sucks her body to extract the evil, this *dhāmi* or other must pay a fine of Rs. 20. If he does not pay the fine, he must be imprisoned.

11) If a woman is sick and if her case necessitates the use of *jhār-phuk*,[15] and if the healer is a man, the *jhārphuk* must be performed at a distance with the aid of a brush of *amṛsa*,[16] a yak's tail,[17] a piece of cloth or *kusa* grass. The man must not touch the patient. But when it is a question of curing boils, he is not guilty if he touches her while opening them or applying medication. In these circumstances, he must not be punished.[18]

12) If a man admits that it is he who used a man-tiger,[19] a *dhāmi*, *jhākri* or *rākas*,[20] or performed sorcery *(boksyāro)*[21] as a magician *(baidyai)*, and if he admits that it is he who by conjuring *devatā* by the use of *mantra-tantra* killed someone by sorcery; and if it is shown that he did in fact kill someone and if (furthermore) he admits having caused that death by the use of *mantra-tantra* or by binding a tiger, then it is a question of a man who in this way caused a *rākas* to come by sorcery, and who, by means of *mantra-tantra* killed someone. In this case, his property must be seized according to the *Ain* and he must be banished from the country. If a woman admits having killed a man with this type of ritual, she must be punished by the confiscation of her property and exiled from the village.

13) Likewise, if a person admits having eaten someone with the help of *mantra-tantra* and *ṭunā*, he must pay a fine of Rs. 50. He will then be chased from the village.

14) Likewise, if a person admits having killed an animal or a bird with the help of *mantra-tantra* or *ṭunā*, an indemnity for the corpse and a fine proportional to the damages caused must be imposed. If he admits having wounded but denies killing, he must pay an indemnity of 50%. He must then be chased from the village.

15) Anyone who, on his own authority or by appealing to another uses magical incantations to put someone under the influence of *mohani*[22] must pay a fine of Rs. 60. Whoever drives someone insane or asks another person to drive him insane must pay a fine of Rs. 120. If death follows, the murderer or he who asked another to kill, will be punished, according to the *Ain*, by the confiscation of his property. In such a case, if the person lodging the complaint is unable to prove his contention, he will be punished and obliged to pay a fine proportional to the substance of his denunciation.

16) People having accompanied a *dhāmi* or others when the latter chased a *bokso* or *boksī* by striking them with nettles, green branches, banana tree bark or by firing upon them with clay pellets must pay a fine of Rs. 30 when it is not proven that the person being chased was in fact a *bokso* or a *boksī*.

If in doing this, these people used sticks and stones, they must pay a fine of Rs. 40 apiece. If the person being chased is killed, one life must pay for another, according to the *Ain*. Those who were merely spectators at this expulsion of a *bokso* or *boksī* and who did not take an active part, will not be punished.

17) In the case of a man who as a result of an illness is not in full possession of his faculties and who, at the time of the treatment by a *dhāmi*, a *jhākri* or other is submitted to *jhār-phuk* and compelled to speak, if the patient asserts that a particular *bokso* or *boksī* troubled him, and if subsequent to investigation it is shown that the patient made the assertion only as a result of his illness, even though it was a *dhāmi*, *jhākri* or other who undertook the treatment, it will not have been clearly shown that the person in question is in fact a *bokso* or *boksī*. Those who call others *bokso* or *boksī* solely on the basis of words expressed by a patient in the grips of his illness, must pay a fine of Rs. 5. If the fine is not paid, they will be imprisoned according to the *Ain*. The *dhāmi*, *jhākri*, or other, as well as the patient, must not be accused.

18) In the case of a *jāt* whose water is not accepted or in the case of a *jāt* contact with which necessitates purification by sprinkling water, whoever, at the time of undertaking a cure, prepares with the help of a *mantra*, of reversal *(ulto garnu)* or of *phuki*[23] a medication containing water without touching it and without dropping saliva in it (but) by keeping a distance then he who takes the said medication and he who prepares it will not be considered guilty. They will not need a purification ceremony.

19) In a case where someone disfigures another, discolours his clothes or makes fun of him by forcing him to walk around the village or town, if the person undergoing this treatment is a man, then the person responsible must pay a fine of Rs. 25. If a woman is forced to walk around the town, the person responsible must pay a fine of Rs. 50. If the fine is not paid, he will be imprisoned according to the *Ain*.

A. W. Macdonald

1. *Sri Pañc Surendra Bikram Sāhadevkā Sāsankālmā baneko muluki ain*, Ministry of Law and Justice, Katmandu, 1965. The section in question is entitled, *boksyāroko* (Of Sorcery) and is found on pp.323-335.

2. Mr. J. Hitchcock (1966:114-27). See the article of the same author (1967). Unfortunately, Hitchcock proves to be poorly acquainted with recent French research in Nepal.

3. B. Pignède (1966:293-298, 315). Cf. also the critical review by Mrs. G. Lot-Falck (1967:81-84).

4. One notes that the *dhāmi* does not use a drum *(ḍhyāṅro)*; the *jhākri*, however, is seldom without his.

5. For further information on the *bokso* and *boksi*, cf. Ministry of Defense, *Nepal and the Gurkhas* (1965:82-85).

6. It is also possible for the *jhākri* to 'play *bokso*', as they say. This means that he uses his knowledge to bewitch someone. If the *jhākri* does this, he immediately loses his social prestige as a healer and runs a high risk of being driven from his village.

7. A similar theory is attested to in Laos. My colleague, G. Condominas, has kindly given me the following information. The *mo mon* healer takes his name from his magical power *mon*. The *phi pop* is a sorcerer in whom resides a malevolent principle that captures the souls of normal people, thereby causing illness and, if he is not stopped, the death of his victims. The *mon* of the *mo* permits the latter, in the course of a magical healing, to discover the sorcerer in the following manner: every action that he undertakes on his victim is reproduced on the body of the *phi pop*; if he whips the patient with his stick, the latter does not suffer from it, but the *phi pop* is wounded; if he shaves his head with a half of a coconut, the sorcerer reappears shaven. Thereby denounced, the *phi pop* is chased by the inhabitants. This quotation is taken from a yet-to-be-published work of Mr. G. Condominas, entitled *Essai sur la Societe Rurale lao de region de Vientiane.*

8. Mme. M. Helffer tells me that at the time of the treatment of a Chetri in Batulecaur, the patient was touched on the cheek by an iron spoon previously heated by the *dhāmi*. Thereupon the *boksini* responsible for the illness declared: 'I put on my iron clothes; I therefore am not afraid of this touch'. The patient in question died a short time later in the hospital at Pokhara. Mme. Helffer had learned of this when she was in Nepal on behalf of the CNRS (1966), within the framework of the RCP Nepal directed by Professor J. Millot. I myself began writing this article in the field in 1966 as a member of the same RCP.

9. Cf. Turner (1931:11): 'a court of law'.

10. Concerning *dvārya* and *bicāri*, cf., for example, D. R. Regmi (1961:281, 288, 294, 299, 301).

11. I do not know the meaning of the expression.

12. Considering *pagari* in the sense of 'turban', one has the impression that the person in question must be a man. However, *pagari dinu* also has the meaning 'to honour', 'to respect'. Moreover, the *pagari* is made of a simple piece of cloth that a woman could make into something other than a headgear.

13. Concerning the hierarchy of the *jāt*, cf. M. Gaborieau (1966: 87); *matvāli* means 'alcohol drinker'.

14. Turner (1931:52): 'an eight anna silver piece'.

15. Concerning *jhārphuk* Sarma (1962:402) indicates: *tantra-sāstrānusār mantra paḍhera kus, kūco, kharānī, jal, ādile rogīko upacār garne kām*, 'reading *mantra* according to the *tantra* and the *sāstra*, and the use of the herb *kus* (cf. Turner 1931:102; *boa cynosuroides*), a brush, ashes, fire, etc., to cure a patient'. According to our personal observations, the healer, whoever he may be, is in no cataleptic state whatsoever at the time of performing this treatment. The first meaning of *jhārnu* is 'upset, cause to fall'. Sarma (1962:402) gives as a second definition: *lāgu bhagū haṭaunāka lāgi tantra mantra dvārā upacār garnu*, 'the use of *tantra-mantra* to strike a possessed person'. *Phuknu* means 'to blow'. The technical meaning indicated by Sarma (1962:712) is: *rog sānta garnākā nimitta mantra paḍhera phu phu garnu*, ' a blowing accompanied by the reading of *mantra* to calm a patient'. Generally one brushes the patient with grass, etc. in order to alleviate the pain, and this action is accompanied by blowing.

16. Cf. Turner (1931:22): *amriso*: 'a grass from which brooms are made, Thysanalaena agrestis'.

17. On the use of yak tails, cf. Macdonald (1962:131,N.28).

18. This section is particularly poorly conserved, and the punctuation is defective.

19. *gurau*: Turner (1931:145): 'a particular kind of magician supposed to possess the power of turning himself into a tiger.

20. *rākas*: (Turner 1931:532): 'Virago, shrew, termagant'.

21. This part of the sentence should perhaps be read differently:

'who used a *dhāmi/jhākri* (who is) a man-tiger, (the art) of sorcery or a *rākas...*' The condition of the text does not permit a definitive translation.

22. S. V.: *mohani*, Sarma (1962:357) indicates: *arulāi vasmā pārne mantra vā vidyā*, '*mantra* or science that makes one fall under the control of another'.

23. The practice of *ulto garnu* has not as yet been made clear by ethnographers. According to my friend, K. B. Bista (who kindly read this text with me and who allowed me to profit from his advice), the *jhākri/dhāmi* or the *jhārphuke* (who can be neither *jhākri* nor *dhāmi*) blows *(phukcha)* on a piece of food or drink destined to be consumed by the patient. Having done this, he murmurs *mantra* and also turns the food/drink with the aid of a knife or another sharp instrument. When consumed the substance in question will have the effect of reversing *(ulto garnu)* the patient's pain and transforming his malaise into comfort. A special medication *(ultā khānu)* is sometimes prepared by the practitioner and given to the patient who suffers from stomach pains. This medication consists of honey, liquified butter and *nil tutho*. S.V.: *nilo tutho*, Turner (1931:287) indicates: 'a particular kind of very poisonous green or blue mineral, blue vitriol'.

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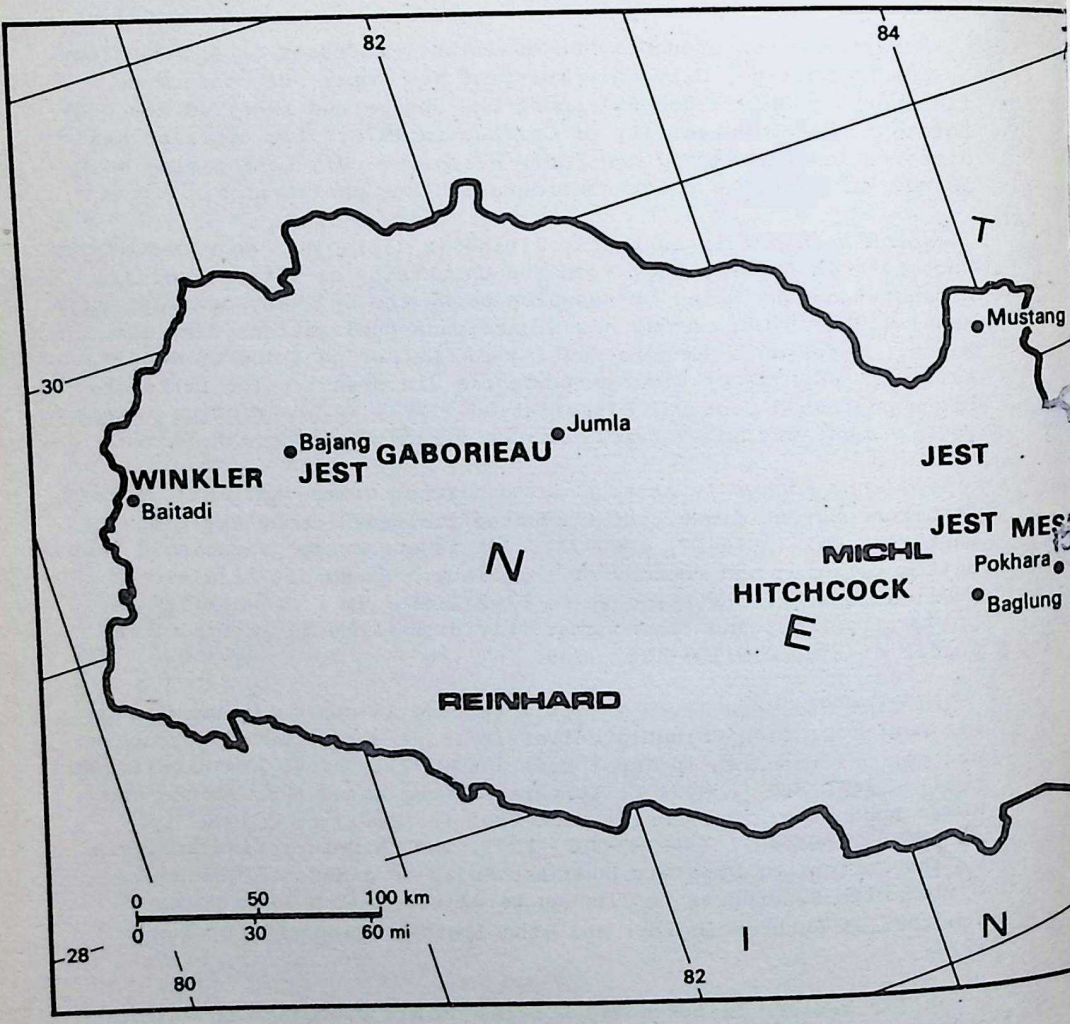
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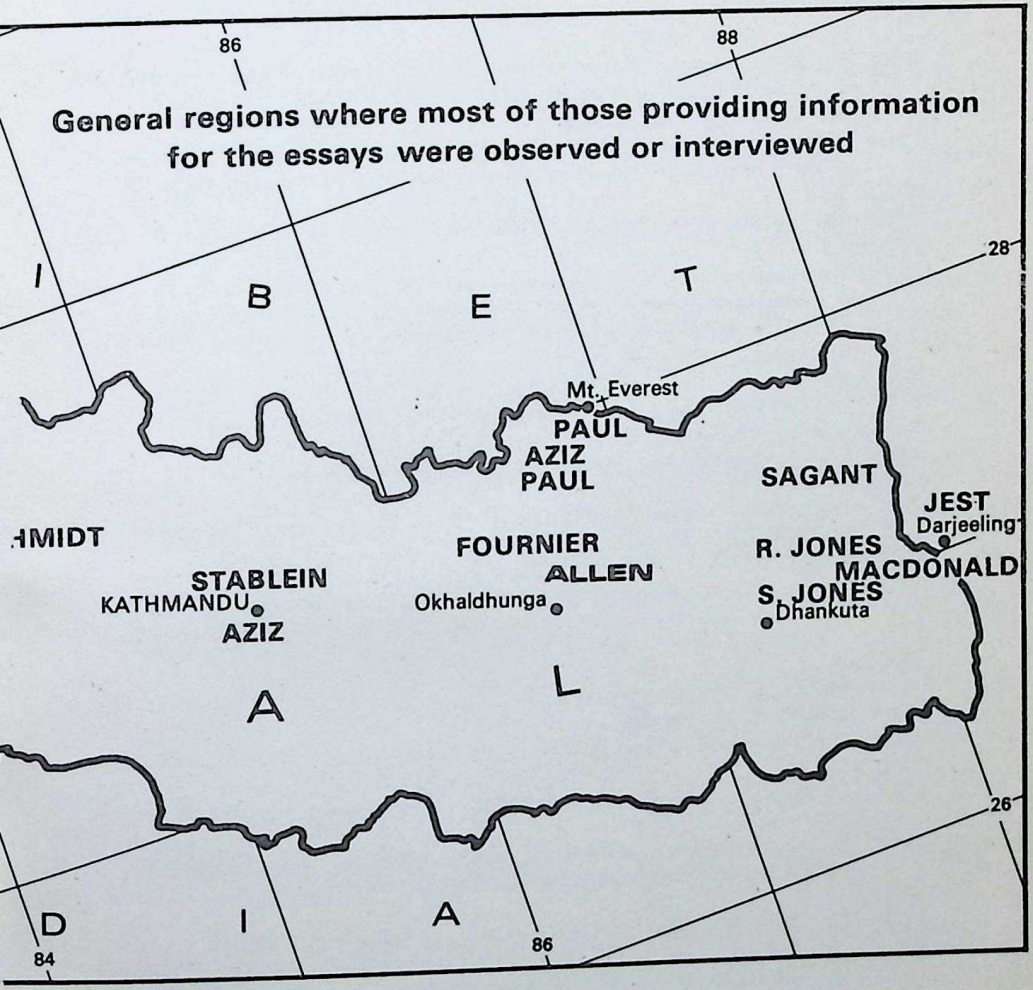
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Cover photograph by Corneille Jest

1V02H0701

ISBN 0 7069 0438 9

Christoph Von Fürer-Haimendorf

RETURN TO THE NAKED NAGAS

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